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PRACTICAL COMMENTARY,

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A

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

ON

OUR BLESSED LORD'S

SERMON ON THE MOUNT;

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES;

AND PARABLES.

TOGETHER WITH

A BRIEF PARAPHRASE AND CORRECTIONS OF THE
AUTHORIZED VERSION.

BY THE

REV. JOHN ROGERS PITMAN, M.A.,

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF KENT.

LONDON:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN advancing years admonished me to retire from Parochial labours, the secession did not absolve me from the ordination-vow by which a Priest is engaged to be "diligent in reading the Holy Scripture." Under a sense of this obligation, I directed my studies towards the execution of a plan long ago projected, *A Practical Commentary upon the Four Gospels, based upon the Family-Expositor of Dr. Philip Doddridge*. My purpose will be better explained by adverting to the component parts of his Exposition; and by stating, at the same time, in what respects I agree with, or presume to differ from, a work whose praise is in all the churches.

1. The HARMONY, or rather Monotessaron (the selection and combination of the passages from the Four Evangelists into one continuous narrative), is retained, for the most part, entire.

2. The CHRONOLOGIC arrangement is adapted to that of Professor Robinson. In consequence, some sections of Dr. Doddridge are transposed; and some verses, placed in a different section.

3. The CRITICAL Remarks are omitted; as the proposed commentary is, solely, of a practical nature.

4. The PARAPHRASE is much retrenched; and the inter-

pretations, conveyed in it, are occasionally corrected, in conformity to the decision of other Expositors.

5. The **VARIOUS SENSES** of a doubtful passage are stated; as at pp. 35. 283. 336.

6. In the **NEW VERSION**, which Dr. Doddridge has interwoven in his Paraphrase, he often deviates unnecessarily from the Authorized Translation. Whatever alterations, of this nature, occur in the present work, rest upon the sanction of Dr. Campbell; Bishop Pearce; Bishop Middleton; Reverend the Professor Scholefield; Dr. Burton; Mr. Valpy; Mr. Trollope; Mr. Holden; Dr. Adam Clarke; Dr. Bloomfield; Mr. Greswell; and other learned and judicious critics.

7. The **SECTIONS**, in the Family-Expositor, are, sometimes, too extended in length: consequently, several important topics are treated in too cursory a manner. For example: Section **xxxvii.** comprises *all* the Beatitudes: whereas each of them demands a separate comment. This consideration induced me to divide each Section into minor portions; altering the word *Section* into *Chapter*; and terming each *subdivision* a *section*. For example: Section X., in Doddridge, becomes Chapter X.; and the topics, included within it, become sections: as, § 1. Birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. § 2. Anthem of the Angels. § 3. The Shepherds visit Bethlehem. § 4. The Circumcision of Jesus.

The numerical order of the Chapters corresponds with that of the Sections in Professor Robinson's Harmony.

8. The **IMPROVEMENTS**, subjoined by Dr. Doddridge, to the end of each Section, are either enlarged by, or wholly exchanged for, materials selected and arranged from other Commentators, or from Sermon-writers.

9. The **PARAPHRASE** (as in the Family-Expositor) is distinguished by Roman character; and the **VERSION**, by *Italic*. In this part of the work, I have committed some typographical errors.

To complete my proposed task, has formed the assiduous occupation of more than three years. I may truly say, *Nulla dies sine linea*. . On arriving at the termination of the undertaking, the materials, intended to form the "Improvements," had increased to so great a magnitude, that to commit the whole to the Press would be a very imprudent hazard. I have not, therefore, ventured beyond the publication of a few detached portions, as samples (as it were) of the entire work. These portions, though few, must be classed among the most important passages of our Blessed Lord's Evangelical history, as being some of his more continuous Addresses to his disciples or general hearers.

I. R. PITMAN, M.A.

Bath, June, 1852.

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. The preceding List of Parables rests upon the authority of Arch-deacon NARES, to whom Mr. HORNE refers, vol. i. Append. No. IV. ch. i. § 2. Theological critics are not unanimous in fixing definitively the precise number of our Lord's Addresses, to which the term *parable* is strictly applicable. DODD enumerates twenty-two; FARRER, twenty; GRESWELL, twenty-seven; TRENCH, thirty. Mr. TRENCH has given a list of some of the chief works on Parables. A complete reference to writers upon these subjects will be found in Mr. DARLING's '*Cyclopædia Bibliographica*,' now in course of publication, and a specimen of which is subjoined at the end of this volume.

A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

ON

OUR BLESSED LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

§ 1. Jesus prepares to address the assembled multitudes. MATTHEW, v. 1, 2. LUKE, vi. 2. *AND Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up into the mountain-district; and when he had sat, his disciples, including all his general hearers, came near unto him: and he lifted up his eyes on them; and he opened his mouth, and taught them; saying.*

v. 1: THE Jewish Doctors, when teaching, were accustomed to sit. (HORNE, vol. 3. p. 248.) v. 2: *To open the mouth* is a phrase denoting that the speaker is about to utter a grave and important communication.

By bearing in mind some of the objects to which our Saviour's instructions more immediately refer, we shall the more justly appreciate the instructions themselves.

Our Lord was anxious to instil into the minds of his general hearers, just notions of the Messiah's kingdom. Multitudes had now assembled around him. Many had beheld his miracles. Expectations, thus excited by a display of divine power, and by our Saviour's announcing the approach of a kingdom, required to be corrected and enlightened.—Do ye, O Jews, expect a temporal Messiah? Are ye proudly dreaming of glory and conquest and carnage and universal empire? Are ye anticipating the riches and honours and possessions of this world? How gross is your error! My subjects must be distinguished by their poverty of spirit, by humility, by meekness, by patience under persecution. Without these qualities which your carnal

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minds reject, all entrance into my kingdom is denied: it is a spiritual kingdom; and not founded upon the pomps and vanities of the world.

Though the *Apostles*, properly so called, had not yet been sent forth by an express commission; yet some who were likely to be honoured with that office, were now in attendance: to them, therefore, our Lord's instruction might, in part, be dispensed with great propriety. He accordingly reminds them, that, as the salt of the earth, they were especially bound to exhibit a pure example. As the doctrines which they were about to preach, would be in opposition to the corruptions of the human heart, they must arm themselves against persecution, and lean upon the happiness which was reserved in heaven.

A new Teacher would naturally advert to the lessons of preceding Instructors: or what was the necessity of coming to repeat what had already been said? Our Lord, therefore, makes many direct applications to the Scribes and Pharisees and Rabbins who had occupied the chair of Moses; but preached little more than ceremonial ablutions; debased the word of God by ridiculous puerilities; crushed it under a load of traditions; and enfeebled the moral force of the plainest precepts by fanciful distinctions of duty. These national teachers were marked by pride and hypocrisy; and admitted no pupils into their schools of instruction, except the wealthy and the great. Moses himself was now to make way for a Prophet from whom he as a type had borrowed his lustre: and even the moral duties of the Decalogue were to be expanded into wider application; founded upon higher motives; and enforced by more solemn sanctions.

By ourselves, in reading the Sermon-on-the-Mount, two cautions must be adopted. 1. Whatever was (as it were) the local propriety of our Saviour's admonitions, the spirit of them pervades all times and nations. The obligation of obedience may have commenced, when our Lord first opened his lips upon the Mount; but it does not terminate when he closed them; the only sound which supersedes his accents, is the trumpet of the Arch-angel who will summon mankind to be tried by this one standard,—the neglect or observance of the precepts bequeathed to us by our Judge. Let conscience be our commentator: if it be faithful, it will not say,—‘This precept censures no one but the hypocritical Pharisee; that observation was intended for an

Apostle :—but from whatever part of our Saviour's Discourse a moral can be drawn of wide and general application, let our conscience become a second Nathan, and boldly utter the words, 'Thou art the Man.'—" *Whosoever* heareth these words, must *do* them."

2. Let us not expect in our Lord's discourse a human composition, formally arranged as a treatise on ethics, branching out into methodized sections, and obviating this or that objection. It suffices that all which the occasion of the sermon allowed to be done, has been done ; that the most important duties have been enforced ; that the motives of action are placed where they ought to be placed ; and that every precept is clothed with the dignity and authority of a Teacher sent from God ; a Teacher who himself is God. If St. John assures us that "the world could not contain the books intended to record all the miracles of Christ ;" the same observation may be applied to the words which he uttered. These omissions furnish fresh motive to prize and to obey what instructions we actually possess ; and that our obedience, animated by a love of the Teacher, and sustained by his grace, may conciliate for us a place among those whom he pronounces *Blessed* or *Happy*.

Long had that title *happy* been abused and misunderstood : long had *the chief good* been the subject of philosophical discussion and distracting search. But to those who feel the insufficiency of what the world can offer, in riches, honours, and sensual gratification, towards satisfying all our nobler desires ; how welcome is the definitive assurance that true happiness consists in the graces of the Spirit : at that pure and holy fountain, we may drink without feeling any second thirst. We shall be enabled to taste those spiritual pleasures ; which in proportion as we pursue them, bring us into closer communion with their divine Author.

That *eight* Beatitudes are distinctly specified, does not imply that the word *happy* may not be extended to other Christian qualities : our Lord, speaking as a Jewish teacher, adopts the idiom of the Jewish teachers ; who in commenting on the Sacred Writings seem fond of naming a certain quantity of Blessings. Thus Abraham is said to have been blessed with *seven* blessings : David, Daniel with his three companions, and the King Mesiah, with *six* blessings each. (See LIGHTFOOT.) Nor are we to

suppose that though, in our Lord's enumeration of Beatitudes, we find the word *Blessed* or *Happy* often repeated, the roads to heaven are, on that account, many and various. Christ is *The Way* pre-eminently. No true Christian is allowed to say, 'I am meek; and need not therefore be merciful;' or, 'I am poor in spirit; and therefore, need not be a peace-maker.' As in various places of scripture, faith or hope or charity or the love or fear of God, frequently stands for the whole duty of a Christian; so here likewise, in each beatitude, our Saviour annexes the promised happiness of heaven to the universal practice of our whole Christian duty. At the same time, we cannot but admire the beauty and elegance, the variety and instructiveness, in which our Christian duty is described by some particularly eminent virtue, and enforced by a suitable and appropriate reward. The *poor in spirit* shall receive the *riches* of God's kingdom. The *mourner* shall forget his sorrows in the *comforts* of eternity. The *compassionate* shall find *compassion* from God. The *pure in heart* shall dwell in the presence of *holiness* itself. The *meek* who are often deprived, by the violent, of what they possess in this world, shall find an inheritance in the true Canaan, on high.

§ 2. Our Lord inculcates humility. MATTHEW, v. 3: *HAPPY are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* LUKE, vi. 20: *HAPPY are ye Poor.*

WHAT is *poverty of spirit*? It cannot be a state of beggary: for though riches may engender pride; yet the poorer men are, the more daring they often become in outrage and impiety: a disposition which cannot be a qualification for eternal happiness. On the other hand, we see many rich men, not '*high-minded, and trusting in uncertain riches*;' not insolent and oppressive; but courteous and charitable; referring all they have, to the undeserved bounty of the heavenly Donor. Christ was, it is true, the poor man's preacher, and the poor man's comforter: but a mere outward poverty, or an avowed voluntary poverty will entitle none to a blessing. If it be the duty of all Christians to turn monks and friars mendicant, all other Romanists could not be saved. Accordingly, while St. Luke says

poor, St. Matthew explains the word by subjoining *in their spirit*, in the sentient and thinking principle of man; *poor*, in consequence of their humble lowly spirit. This is the usual expression by which the Scriptures represent the humble man: 'Better it is to be of an *humble spirit* with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud:' Prov. xvi. 19. 'I dwell with him that is of a contrite and *humble spirit*:' Isa. lvii. 15. This poverty of spirit does not, therefore, relate to actual condition in society, but to the internal disposition of the heart; and may be considered as denoting true Christian humility.

This quality is founded upon a lively sense of God's greatness, holiness, and goodness: and is, consequently, displayed in the attempt to repress all proud and arrogant thoughts of ourselves. It dictated the language of Abraham: "I who am but dust and ashes, have undertaken to speak to the God of heaven:" of Job, "I abhor myself in dust and ashes:" of Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies."

This humble feeling of spiritual poverty in the sight of God naturally produces humility towards men. The poor in spirit pays honour to whom honour is due; to rulers and superiors; and observes courtesy towards all, as children of one common Father. He is content to imitate rather than to envy and malign those who surpass him in real worth.

This humility quickens the sense of duty. Pride is one great cause of insolent disobedience to the divine will. Sinners walk arrogantly, and say, "Who is the Lord that we should hearken to his voice?"

This poverty of spirit implies a mind, not agitated by many sinful emotions which worldly pride is apt to suggest. If the rich man is willing to part with his wealth rather than betray the honour of the giver; or if those in low estate abstain from murmuring against God's providence; both are *poor in spirit*: in the rich man, God sees a Moses who preferred the afflictions of Israel to the splendours of Pharaoh;—in the other, Christ says, as to the Church of Smyrna, "I know thy tribulation and thy poverty; but thou art rich;" even in patience, contentment, and faith.

This humility is termed *poverty of spirit*. The humble Christian carefully distinguishes between what is his own, and what is God's. He is sensible that all the evil he hath, is his

own ; and, in reference to good, he applies the words of St. Paul, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." All his riches, life, power, strength, virtue, righteousness, are in Jesus Christ. He is always in extreme want of divine guidance, and divine support, to prevent and follow him. Whoever feels this utter helplessness and extreme indigence of soul, in estrangement from communion with God, will not disdain the title of *Poor*.

This poorness of spirit, as opposed to pride, is in the strongest manner enforced upon us, in Scripture, both by precept and example. We are enjoined to "clothe ourselves with humility ; not to be high-minded ; and to be meek and lowly in heart : " all which precepts are only different ways of enjoining that duty which St. Matthew calls *poorness of spirit*.

Again : we have a variety of examples, in Scripture, of this virtue. John the Baptist, though the fore-runner of Jesus, was an eminent instance of humility. Such also was the Virgin Mary, who received the highest favours with the meekest humility. St. Paul, though a chief apostle, ascribes his excellent gifts to the gratuitous favour of God. If these holy persons thought humility so necessary to *them*, what ought *we* to think ?

To the *poor in their spirit*, is promised the kingdom of heaven ; even the kingdom of grace in this world, and the kingdom of future glory. In this world, the humble man is convinced of the vanity of all worldly things, and lives entirely to God ; and therefore is free from various distresses ; not only from those which attend the frequent disappointment of his wishes, but from the distress of finding that when they are obtained, they do not answer his expectations : such a man is above the world. Then again, as to pride, the proud man never meets with that respect which he thinks his due : and all the deficiency becomes matter of distress. In short, no man can enjoy what he really is, while he thinks himself more than he is. Nor can any man enjoy himself, when he puts his happiness in the hands of others. On the other hand, the humble man, by regulating all high and lofty thoughts, is the better adapted, and more likely to receive, warmer and stronger and more plenteous supplies of divine grace. Low and mean thoughts of ourselves will make us kneel the oftener before the throne of grace. "Be clothed with humility," enjoins St. Peter ;

and he assigns the reason; "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." To the poor in spirit, belongs the kingdom of glory by express promise: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Humility is thus the surest way to elevation. What the Apostle said of Jesus, *that he humbled himself and therefore received a name above every name*,—may, in a subordinate sense, be applied to the Christian, humbly imitating his divine Master;—that present depression, sanctified by patience and resignation, is the gate into the most exalted glory. *Happy, therefore, are the poor in their spirit; for theirs, is the kingdom of heaven.*

§ 3. Happiness of Christian mourners. MATTHEW, v. 4. LUKE, vi. 21. *HAPPY are ye who weep now: for ye shall laugh. Happy are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

THESE are the words of Him who had experienced the miseries of human nature, and the glories of the divine; and must therefore be a proper judge whether happiness may consist with affliction.

But shall all who sow in tears, reap in joy? There is a sorrow proceeding from natural causes; as when melancholy arises from bodily distempers. There is a sorrow that proceeds from ill beginnings, as from malice, envy, and servile fear; and which may tend to ill ends, as revenge, impatience, and despair. It may, therefore, be pronounced, that Christian mourning is occasioned either by zeal for the honour of God, or by a concern for mankind; and is thus founded upon the principles of piety and charity.

In reference to sorrow of this description, one great cause is a serious consideration of sin. For a man to weigh attentively what an evil is sin; how contrary to God, to his nature, his will, his commands; to his goodness, his justice, and especially to the great mystery of godliness; then to consider how contrary it is to man, his reason, his inward peace, his spiritual interests; and how much of this evil abounds; that the whole world lieth in wickedness; such thoughts must present a sad scene for contemplation, and such as will justly call for sorrow

and mourning. This was the religious sorrow of the Psalmist : "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy laws." And doubtless, among the bitter ingredients of our Lord's Passion, this was none of the least,—to foresee, that many, by their final impenitence, would not receive benefit from his sufferings. And if we may judge by proportion, the angels who rejoice at the conversion of one sinner, cannot but mourn and lament for the wickedness of impenitent millions.

The Christian mourners lament not only for sin in the abstract : they feel grief on their own particular account. Even after they have made some progress in sanctification, they mourn that they should ever have been unthankful and disobedient. This contrite temper is maintained by the consciousness of unmortified corruptions. These resemble the remnants of the nations which God left among the Israelites : if we remit our watch, they are snares and traps, scourges in our sides, thorns in our eyes. Christians lament their imperfect graces ; that want of zeal which clogs their best services ; that spiritual drowsiness which often overtakes the prudent as well as the foolish virgins. While they see their Saviour dishonoured, and his ordinances derided, they are apt to exclaim, "Wo is me that I must dwell in Mesech, and have my habitation among the tents of Kedar." Not that they are impatiently rebellious under sickness and the frowns of the world ; but because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. Here, they are pilgrims : they journey to their true home, over rough and thorny paths : their native city is Jerusalem on high. Often, therefore, they utter the aspiration, "O that I had wings like a dove ! for then I would flee away, and be at rest."

Another reasonable cause why a Christian should mourn, is the duty of *weeping with those who weep*, and sympathizing in the sorrows and troubles of our fellows. In consideration of the miseries of human life, some of the ancients reckoned an early death among the greatest blessings of heaven : but Solomon goes farther ; and prefers an untimely birth before a man that has spent many years in this world. Our compassionate Saviour wept over the approaching ruin of Jerusalem : and shall not a Christian mourn for the miseries of the whole world ? We suspect the good nature of him who can endure to sit out a tragedy with dry eyes : and can we look upon a miserable world without

mourning? Christian charity which obliges us to sympathize with the miseries of each particular man, and to *weep with those that weep*, does much more require us to lament the common miseries of human life.

To sorrow of this pure nature a promise of consolation is annexed: *happy are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

To look only at the outward afflictions of good men, we shall be convinced that they have an inward spring of joy, which external calamities cannot exhaust. St. Paul took pleasure in infirmities, in necessities, in persecutions, for the sake of Christ. A penitential sorrow weans our hearts from this world. It occasions a drawing near to God in prayer and meditation, and especially in contemplation of grace and redeeming love, in the person of the well-beloved Son. This godly sorrow is attended with great vigilance against temptations; and thereby guards against the sorrow of repeated sins. The farther we advance in bringing forth these fruits of repentance, the more shall we enjoy peace of conscience; a control of sinful passions; a joy in believing; and a contentment of mind in the change of condition, so great and sweet, that it resembles a heaven upon earth.

But if the fruits of godly sorrow be such in this life, how much sweeter must they be in heaven! Mourners of Sion; ye that are mourning for your own sins, or for the sins of others; or are mourning under corruptions not totally subdued; or because your graces are not stronger; or because you must still sojourn in this valley of tears;—ye shall be comforted. Consider what God hath done for you already: in the midst of your tears, what joys, what gales of refreshment, what whispers of comfort, what marks of favour. Soon will ye hear the gladdening words, Enter ye into the joy of your Lord. Then all that can sadden, will have vanished: sin and temptation will be no more. As one hour changed the fetters of Joseph into a chain of gold; his rags, into princely robes; his prison, into a palace;—so shall your souls enter into the region of endless comforts, where your mourning will be converted into joy; and your sighs, into anthems of praise. “God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. There shall be neither sorrow nor crying; for the former things are passed away.”—“He that now goes on his way

sorrowing, and bringeth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." They will be received into the New Jerusalem, where there will be no room left even for godly sorrow; but all shall be joy and gladness, harmony and thanksgiving.

§ 4. Our Lord inculcates the quality of meekness. MATTHEW, v. 5: *HAPPY are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

MEEKNESS, as a temper of the mind, is a proper grace or gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby a man is enabled to moderate all violent impulses of passion, and to behave with gentleness, in all intercourse with his neighbours, both in word and deed. Though men may seem born with an unruffled placidity of temper, yet even this natural meekness must be refined by grace, before it can be acceptable to God in Christ Jesus.

Meekness may be considered in reference to God and man.

In relation to God, there is a twofold meekness. I. 1. It implies a full and ready submission of soul to the authority of his word. This is the character of the meek, in Scripture. 'The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way.' (Ps. xxv. 9.) 'The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.' (Is. lxi. 1.) 'Receive with meekness the engrafted word.' (James, i. 21.) In these passages meekness does not merely imply a sedate composure of mind, but a diffident temper, willing to sacrifice prejudices upon the sole declarations of God. Such was the temper which dictated to Samuel the words, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.'

I. 2. Meekness, in reference to God, implies an absolute resignation to his providence. Though God allows the complaints of suffering nature, yet he expects us to suppress all doubt of his justice, wisdom, and goodness, in his dispensations. 'I was dumb' (said the meek Psalmist) 'and opened not my mouth: for it was thy doing.'

II. Meekness, in relation to men, expresses itself in a great variety of ways.

1. The meek will not take offence hastily. An action may carry the aspect of a premeditated affront; and yet, in reality,

there was not the least design of that nature; and what was not ill intended, should not be ill taken. The best, not the worst construction, should be placed upon words and actions. Meekness (like charity) 'is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; hopeth all things.' 2. The meek man carefully keeps a bridle upon his mouth. He is either silent; or by soft answers turns away wrath. Moses spake 'unadvisedly' with his lips; and upon that account, was debarred from entering into Canaan, though, in his general character, he was pronounced to be 'the meekest man upon earth.' (Numb. xii. 3.) 3. The meek man is slow in using rough methods in the case even of injurious treatment. He adopts argument and cool conference, before he has recourse to harsher expedients. 4. The meek man is ready to embrace all overtures of reconciliation. 'Anger *resteth* in the bosom of *fools*;' who let the sun go down upon their wrath. 5. The meek man is courteous and affable; he is not overbearing, and full of himself, to the neglect and contempt of others. 6. The meek man is a cement of society, by being willingly subject to his superiors in office and political authority; he pays honour to whom honour is due; and respect to whom respect. Faction he leaves to the proud and discontented.

Meekness is particularly to be expressed by a temperate behaviour in matters of religion. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' Instead of endeavouring, by rage and abuse, to bring men to our sentiments, we are taught to be ready to give 'an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the faith that is in us;' and to endeavour to reclaim an adversary in the spirit of meekness.

In short, as men are judged by their usual associates; so meekness may be known by being always joined with humility, resignation, contentment, cheerfulness, courtesy, gratitude, moderation, peaceableness, kindness, patience, charity, and all other social and good-natured virtues.

To meekness is annexed the promise of *inheriting the earth* or land. This promise is partly fulfilled in a literal sense. Laws and government are generally the protectors of the meek against oppressors. Their abhorrence of rebellions and insurrections does not expose them to confiscation. Whether their portion of this earth be great or little, they enjoy it with tran-

quillity, cheerfulness, peace, and comfort of mind ; which are among the greatest blessings upon the earth.

But is the happiness of the meek limited to this world ? The other promises of happiness, in the eight first verses of this chapter, manifestly relate to things spiritual and eternal. Such qualities are enforced as Christ deemed to be the fundamental principles of the new kingdom which he now announced. Since that kingdom was not of this world ; the land which forms the inheritance of the meek, cannot, by consistency of argument, be considered as an exception ; but must figuratively denote that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness ; of which, meekness is a part and parcel. It had long been customary, among the most enlightened Jews, to interpret temporal promises by referring to eternal benefits. Thus David admonishes his contemporary Jews to beware of forfeiting, by want of faith, the privilege of entering into rest, at the very time when the Promised Land was in their possession. If Moses had his land of promise, with the prospect of which he roused the Israelites ; our Lord has, also, his land, with the hopes of which he encourages and stimulates his disciples. Our Lord, therefore, alludes to heavenly happiness ; but this future reward is veiled under figurative and typical expressions ; which his hearers, being long habituated to similar applications, would clearly have understood.

Strange it would be, if meekness had no other reward than an earthly inheritance, seeing that this quality is of no ordinary nature, but enjoined by the doctrine of Christ, and enforced by his example. "*Come unto me,*" saith Jesus, "*and learn*"—learn what ? to work miracles ? no : "*learn of me ; for I am meek.*" His whole life was one continued patience, under indignities. The unkindness of the Samaritans could not induce him to invoke upon them avenging flames. The seizure of his sacred person could not extort one angry look. He returns a mild answer to the officer who had inflicted a blow. He submits without impatience to the revilings of sinners, and to the shame of the cross. 'He is led as a lamb to the slaughter ; and as a sheep dumb before its shearers, so he opened not his mouth.'

Thus to imitate the Master, is in itself to cherish the hope of rejoining him in heaven.

§ 5. Happiness of those who intensely seek after Righteousness. MATTHEW, v. 6: *HAPPY are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be satisfied.* LUKE, vi. 21: *HAPPY are they who hunger now.*

To hunger and *to thirst* are, in all languages, metaphors very expressive of ardent desire ; a desire most urgent in pressure ; a desire, frequently recurring ; a desire which cannot be gratified by any other than by the object especially desired.

The word *righteousness* does not mean the "righteousness of faith," by which, through the merits of the Cross, we are freed from sin, and justified before God. The word, in this sense, occurs only in the epistles of St. Paul. The Jews whom our Saviour now addresses, had no apprehension, that the Messiah was to die ; and much less that they were to be justified by his death : and, therefore, if Christ had spoken of an imputed righteousness, they would not have understood him. We may, therefore, consider this spiritual hunger and thirst as denoting, 1, an ardent desire for true piety ; and, 2, a constant progress in virtue, and still higher attainments in universal goodness.

1. This spiritual hunger and thirst import that we feel no satisfaction in a worldly life ; and that the food which the world supplies, is not better than husks. An appetite after righteousness is very feeble in those who are insensible to the nature of sin, and take up their rest in sublunary enjoyments. It is the pearl which a Christian merchant is ready to buy at any price. A man hungry and thirsty, prizes the meat and drink which are set before him. It is impossible to long after what we do not value.

2. It imports an earnest desire to make progress in righteousness. A Christian's labour, like the husbandman's, is never at an end. When one evil passion is mortified, he must direct his vigilance to another. Spiritual hunger and thirst are not a momentary appetite : insomuch that if a good Christian were to live a thousand years, he would still find degrees and acts of righteousness, as food for holy and ardent desires. These desires will never suffer him to be satisfied with elements and first principles. If our zeal for righteousness rises no higher than barely to have the character of righteous persons, we shall probably come to find, that we have no true zeal at all.

To those who truly hunger and thirst after righteousness, the promise is accorded that *they shall be filled*; or in other words; I., they shall obtain their desire; and, II., shall be fully satisfied in the enjoyment of it.

I. But by what means, may this desire be satisfied? Can man, exposed to many evil passions, make a continued progress in godliness? In himself, he is feeble: but if his heart cherish an ardent desire for righteousness, he can betake himself to those powerful aids, which a holy Saviour is ready to extend.

1. Among these assistances towards the attainment of holiness, is the *written word*. The Gospel teaches and enjoins the purest morality. Many heathen teachers confounded vices with virtues, and even allowed the commission of gross sensuality. The most spotless purity, the most immaculate holiness, is the rule of our actions, and the measure of our duty. "Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect." Not the commission only, but the intention or conception of guilt, is criminal. The source and spring of our actions, the heart, is hereby secured. The Gospel presents the most powerful motives for the observance of religion and virtue; since the righteous, we are assured, will obtain the prize of life eternal; and death, the terror of unassisted nature, is the gate into everlasting bliss.

2. From the *doctrine* of Christ, let us turn to the *example*, which he left us, that we should follow his steps. The most eminent prophets, philosophers, and lawgivers, are not faultless and unerring guides: but Jesus is a complete and perfect model of universal goodness. In him, we observe no spot or blemish, no infirmity or defect, to shade or obscure his excellences. What assiduity in public and private prayer, what zeal for the honour of God, what resignation to his will, may be traced in the deportment of Christ! There is not one spiritual grace, the observance of which will bring us nearer to God, which is not exemplified in some action of the holy child Jesus. Do we really hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then shall we often meditate on his sacred history, that our souls may take some impressions of his holiness; and the same mind may be in us which was in Christ Jesus.

3. Lest we should urge that the example of our Lord is far beyond our powers, he has adorned his Church with holy Sacra-

ments, as encouraging pledges of his love. Our corrupt nature had rendered us prone to all manner of wickedness, and thereby exposed to the anger of God : but by baptism, we are regenerate or born again unto righteousness ; and, as children of God, we are put into a covenanted condition of living a life more agreeable to his holy will. By kneeling at the Redeemer's table, with dispositions suited to the symbols of his meritorious cross, we shall find our souls strengthened by spiritual grace ; even as our bodies can be refreshed by bread and wine. When our Lord had quitted his earthly sojourn, he bequeathed his Church to the consolations of the Holy Spirit ; that in those who feel an ardent *thirst for righteousness*, there might be in them, through the influence of the Spirit, "a well of water springing-up into everlasting life." This desire of holiness, the Spirit cherishes and promotes in a variety of manners. He illuminates the understanding, that we may comprehend the word of God. (Acts, xvi. 14.) The Spirit makes us members of that body, of which Jesus is the head. (1 Cor. vi. 17.) He creates in us a sense of the paternal love of God, and gives us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance. (Romans, viii. 14.) By these and similar offices of love, the Holy Spirit when not grieved and resisted, is ever ready to forward in our hearts the work of sanctification.

II. The second thing included in the promise of our Lord is, that when they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, have obtained the object of their desire, they shall be fully pleased and *satisfied* in the possession and enjoyment of it. The consciousness of labouring to discharge our duty as a faithful subject of Christ's kingdom, is a pleasure, which exceeds every other joy ; springs up fresh and lively, upon every reflection ; gives a relish to every other enjoyment ; supports us under the unavoidable distresses of life ; and is attended with the esteem of the better and wiser part of mankind. But what completes and perfects this happy state of mind is the delightful expectation of the favour and approbation of God. The children of God are thus elevated far above this world. While they look with Christian pity on deluded mortals who are keenly pursuing what without purity and integrity would be sources of misery, or at best, mere dreams and shadows ; they are easy and contented with their own lot, knowing that, however obscure and

adverse it may be, they have in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. This sanctified hunger will prove a far greater blessing than surfeiting fulness. He whose appetites are confined to earthly food, will hunger and thirst again. The water which Christ gives, is a fountain which springs up into everlasting life : the manna which he affords, is the bread which cometh down from heaven.

§ 6. Happiness of the Merciful. MATTHEW, v. 7: *HAPPY are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy from God.*

MERCY is that mental quality which comprises not merely an idle pain at viewing the sorrows of others ; but a sincere and ardent desire to relieve them. Hence the objects on which mercy is exercised, are as numerous as the wants and calamities incident to human nature. The merciful man labours, as far as his means allow, to instruct the ignorant ; to reclaim the wanderer ; to shelter the persecuted ; to console the mourner ; to forget injuries ; to relieve the indigent ; to comfort the sick. If this world's goods are wanting to him, he offers the tribute of Christian sympathy ; and beseeches God, with earnest supplication, for their support.

But this pleasing duty is not an irregular impulse : but let the manner and motive of mercy be carefully considered. We must bestow with a willing cheerfulness ; with unostentatious modesty ; with no interested expectation of a return ; and with a liberality proportioned to our means. Above all, acts of mercy must be performed with minds full of gratitude to God, who gives both ability and will ; and from a principle of affectionate obedience to the great Redeemer who upon us hath bestowed all, even himself.

To the merciful is annexed the promise, that *they shall obtain mercy* : this promise, even in relation to this world, seems very extensive.

1. A deliverance out of trouble is promised. 'If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, then shall thy light rise in obscurity.' (Is. lviii. 10.) 2. The divine blessing is promised. 'Thou shalt not shut thy hand from thy poor brother : and thine heart shall not be grieved : because that for this thing the Lord

thy God shall bless thee in all thy works.' (Deut. xv.) 3. Mercy is accepted by God as a fruit of contrition: 'Break off thy iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor.' (Dan. iv. 27.) 4. Plenty is promised to the merciful: 'He that gives unto the poor, shall not lack.'—'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and he will pay him again.' (Prov. xix. 17.) 5. Honour is promised: 'He hath given to the poor: his horn shall be exalted with honour: he shall be had in everlasting remembrance.' (Ps. cxii.) 6. Deliverance from enemies is promised: 'Him who considereth the poor, the Lord will not deliver unto the will of his enemies.' 7. God's comforts are promised on a sick bed: 'The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.' (Ps. xli. 3.) 8. A blessing is promised to the posterity of the merciful man: 'He is ever merciful and lendeth: and his seed is blessed.' (Ps. xxxvii. 26.)

Many and powerful are the obligations for the observance of mercy.

It is inculcated upon us as a duty. 'Be ye merciful.'—'Love as brethren, be pitiful.' (1 Pet. iii. 8.) 'What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justly, and to love mercy.'—'Whoso shutteth up the bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' (1 John, iii.) 'Bear ye one another's burdens; and so fulfil the law of Christ.' (Gal. vi. 2.)

Mercy is made an express term of our acceptance with God. 'With the merciful, thou wilt shew thyself merciful.'—'He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.'—'God is not unrighteous to forget any labour of love, shewed towards his name, in ministering to his saints.' (Heb. vi.)

We are fully taught our own need of mercy. None of us can come to God as innocent creatures, but as penitents, who must be beholden to infinite mercy for the pardon of innumerable offences. And how can we have the confidence of saying, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' unless we have previously had mercy on our fellow-servants?

God's actual mercy is, therefore, exhibited in Scripture, as our pattern. He is the 'father of mercies: rich in mercy: full of compassion: his mercies are over all his works.' He remembered us in our low estate of apostasy: and when no other eye pitied us, and no other hand could save us, gave out of the

riches of his grace, his only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. All his mercy is disinterested : nothing but our misery could have moved his tender regard. St. Paul, therefore, urges, 'Be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.' (Eph. iv. 32.)

The Son of God gave us a most illustrious pattern of mercy. The great inducement to veil his original glory in assuming our nature, was not our merit, but our misery. He came to seek and to save them that are lost. When he beheld the multitudes wandering as sheep without a shepherd, he was moved with compassion. (Matt. ix. 36.) When his hearers opposed the designs of his instructions, 'he is *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts.' (Mark, iii. 5.) When he saw Jerusalem on the point of filling up the measure of her iniquities, he shed tears of sorrow. His sympathy with the bodily wants of men is conspicuous : he heals a sick multitude (Matt. xiv. 13) ; he cures the blind men that cried after him ; he restores to life the son of the widow of Nain. He bears an affectionate part with the sisters of Lazarus : he wept and groaned in spirit. Though he was reluctant to offend, in the opening of his ministry, the prejudices of his countrymen, yet he extends his mercy towards the woman of Canaan. Even his enemies felt the benefit of his miraculous powers ; as when he healed the ear of Malchus, who had come, with others, to apprehend him. Nor did he always stay for an application from the wretched : he anticipated the expression of their wants ; as when he said at Bethesda, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' Nor is the benignity of Jesus lessened by ascending to the right hand of God : the Preceptor and Redeemer has become a Mediator ; who can be deeply touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

If the Gospel lay us under so various engagements to a merciful disposition, where shall the cruel appear ? What must become of the spiteful and malicious and injurious ? Shall others be induced, by some ignoble motive, to shew mercy to the miserable ; and shall we, who profess the Gospel, be inferior to them ? Thus will heathens rise up in judgment and condemn the nominal disciples of a merciful Redeemer. In the last great Day, what acceptance can the unmerciful find before the Judge, who places on his right hand those only who have given meat to the hungry, and clothing to the naked ; who have

visited the sick and the prisoner? The merciful will then be gladdened with the words, "Inasmuch, as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me: come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

§ 7. Happiness of the clean in heart. MATTHEW, v. 8: *HAPPY are they who are clean in their heart: for they shall see God.*

THE expression *pure* justly conveys the sense of the precept: but *clean*, the more literal translation, preserves the allusion to be found, in the moral maxims of the New Testament, to the ancient ritual; from which the metaphors of the Sacred Writers are frequently borrowed. The laws in regard to the cleanness of the body and even of the garments, if neglected by any person, excluded him from the Temple. He was incapacitated from being even a spectator of the solemn service at the altar. The Jews considered the empyreal heaven as the archetype of the Temple at Jerusalem. In the latter, they enjoyed the symbols of God's presence, who spoke to them by his ministers: whereas in the former, the blessed inhabitants have an immediate sense of the divine presence; and God speaks to them, face to face. Our Lord, preserving the analogy between the two dispensations, intimates that cleanness will be as necessary in order to procure admission into the celestial Temple, as into the terrestrial. But as the privilege is inconceivably higher, the qualification is more important: the cleanness is not ceremonial, but moral; not of the outward man, but of the inward.

What is the scriptural meaning of purifying ourselves, may be made out thus: the contrary of purity is defilement. Our Saviour has told us what the things are which defile a man: "evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, fornications, thefts, covetousness, deceit, wickedness, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things *come from within*, and *defile* the man." (Mark, vii. 21.) The seat, therefore, of moral defilement is the heart: by which our Saviour means the affections and the disposition. The seat, therefore, of moral purity must be the same: consequently to purify ourselves is to

be cleansed from the presence and pollution of sin ; and of those sins particularly which reside and continue in the heart.

This test of purgation goes beyond the control of the mere external action ; but includes the duty of purifying our thoughts and affections. Though the instances, adduced by our Saviour, are rather a general illustration of his meaning than a complete catalogue of vices to the exclusion of such as are not distinctly specified ; yet even this enumeration shows that our Saviour's lesson extends beyond mere external action ; but adds the duty of purifying the thoughts and affections. Not only are adulteries and fornications mentioned, but evil thoughts and lasciviousness ; not only murder, but an evil eye ; not only thefts, but covetings. Thus, not by lopping off the branches, but by laying the axe to the root, our Saviour has fixed the only rule which can ever produce good morals. (PALEY.)

To purity of heart, is annexed the privilege of *seeing God*. The expression is a Hebrew idiom implying to possess God ; to enjoy his felicity ; and, as favourites and friends, to stand in his presence.

Even in this lower world, earthly affections, carnal thoughts, and sensual desires, spread a veil of spiritual darkness over the mind : God is everywhere : but sinners have eyes and see him not. On the other hand, the true Christian studies the word of God, which is pure, enlightening the eyes. He invokes the aid of the Holy Spirit, for the sanctification of the heart. He feels how odious sin must be to the nature of a God, purer than the sun, purer than angels, and dwelling in light inaccessible. To minds, thus disposed, God will make a nearer approach. The pure in heart will *see* God in his word, as suitable to their spiritual needs ; in his ordinances, as channels of grace ; in his providence, as protector of his Church ; in his mercies, as the tender shepherd of his flock ; and even in his chastisements, as corrections of their infirmities.

The pure having their hearts cleansed from every evil passion which clouds the mind, are favoured with peculiar manifestations of God, even in this world : but hereafter they shall *see God*. As in Eastern kingdoms, few were admitted into the immediate presence of the monarch ; to *see God* has been explained as expressive of the highest possible happiness derived from his favour in the life to come. Yet the phrase to

see God may imply some new and unknown faculty ; by which the saints may contemplate in God all truth and goodness : for truth and goodness subsist in him substantially ; and by that contemplation shall be raised to high degrees of illumination, perfection, and happiness. We reckon it a delightful thing to behold the light ; to contemplate this beautiful theatre of the world ; and to look on the sun, by whose beams all other things are seen. How much more delightful must it be, to behold the Creator of the sun and of the world, in the unveiled beauties of his nature ! He who delighted to dwell in pure hearts, will reveal himself in a more plentiful manner ; and the purer a soul is, clad in a glorified body, but no longer clogged by corporeal infirmity, it will the better *see* and comprehend the mysteries of God's nature ; and will be the more absorbed, with love and admiration, in contemplating the dimensions of redeeming love.

From all beatific vision of God, the impure in heart will be excluded. The truth is, God, in his wisdom, has so contrived our nature and our duty, that piety and happiness are one and the same,—differing but in the particular prospect under which they are contemplated. The good begin their heaven upon earth ; and finish above, what was imperfect below. The more they are enabled, by the aid of grace preventing and following, to mortify sinful appetites, purge off corruptions, acquaint themselves with God by frequent prayer and meditation ; by these means, the more they are spiritualized ; and are more qualified for entrance into the many mansions which a holy Saviour has gone to prepare for their reception. Such disciples settle in a country, of whose language, laws, and customs they have laboured to acquire some previous knowledge. To the unclean, heaven itself would be a place of torment. How can the children of darkness open their eyes to the beams of divine glory ? How shall obscene and blasphemous tongues join in the praise of a spotless God ? Let us not deceive ourselves. To think that, without holiness, a man shall see the Lord, is not to hope, but to presume. He that soweth tares, will not reap wheat : and he that soweth unto the flesh, shall, of the flesh, reap corruption.

§ 8. Happiness of a peaceable disposition. MATTHEW, v. 9: *HAPPY are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God.*

To those who desire happiness, it must appear strange, that whom the world counts miserable, Christ pronounces happy; and whom the world extols, Christ depresses. Military renown, splendid trophies, captured standards, these are the glorious themes of poets and historians: but Jesus affirms, "Happy are the *peace-makers*." The words well become the lips of him who was himself the greatest peace-maker; who made peace not by the blood of victims, slaughtered upon the altars of worldly ambition; but by his own blood shed upon the Cross.

That we may, in some degree, ascertain the reasons why Christ commended the peaceful man; let us endeavour to analyse his character.

1. The peaceful man is free from all inordinate self-love, which embroils with all who oppose or offend it.

2. The peaceful man is patient under many ill things which are said of him. A too easy belief, on such occasions, leads to quarrels.

3. The peaceful man foresees the evil of dissension. The contentious man is involved in quarrels, before he is aware of the consequences.

4. The peaceful man is ever ready to disarm animosity by a candid and ingenuous confession of guilt.

5. The peaceful man is not injurious: he is ready to relax his own rights, whenever a temperate concession is likely to terminate animosity.

6. The peaceful man labours to repress all distracting and revengeful passions, which war against the tranquillity of the soul. Thus St. James decides, that 'wars and fightings among us come even from the lusts that war in our members.'

7. He discourages whisperers and tale-bearers, who 'separate chief friends.'

8. The peaceful man is careful not to inflame those at variance, by aggravating to each the unkindness of the other: knowing, that 'where no wood is, the fire goeth out.'

9. He persuades, as discretion may allow, the contending

parties to refer the matter in dispute, to the decision of some wise and prudent neighbour.

10. He endeavours to incline both parties to coolness and moderation ; reminding them of their Christian obligations in the words, "Sirs, ye are *brethren*."

This disposition of mind marks the peaceful man in all his relations. As a citizen, he will not employ his ear in listening to seditious clamour, nor his tongue in calumniating his rulers, nor his pen in perversion of truth. As the member of the Church of Christ, he will not distract its peace by hasty and crude opinions ; nor will he kindle the fires of persecution. As the member of a family, he will evince himself an affectionate husband, a careful father, a dutiful son.

This disposition leads to the honour of being called *the children of God*.

As the peace-makers carry a striking resemblance of some of the most amiable perfections of God, in the prevailing temper of their minds ; as by their disposition and endeavours to establish and promote love, harmony, and order in the world, they concur with and imitate the best and greatest of all beings in his most beneficial and glorious works ; they are justly to be accounted his children : by being the sons of peace, they are the sons of the God of peace.

The peace-makers labour to resemble Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. He came down from heaven, to declare and establish the terms of reconciliation and peace between God and man ; and by his doctrine and example, inculcated most strenuously and affectionately the law of universal benevolence ; which tends to remove whatever excites vexation and disturbance in the world. When he was born, peace was proclaimed ; when he left the world, peace was bequeathed from the Cross, to them that were near or afar off. The peace-makers tread in these sacred steps ; and are happy in imitating labours of the same generous and beneficent kind. The features and lineaments of peace, impressed upon their souls, discover them to be the *children* of God, by being *brethren* of Christ.

A peaceable temper disposes us for the reception of those graces which peculiarly mark the children of God in this world, as heirs of future glory. If a rebellious spirit expelled from heaven the apostate angels, a peaceful spirit tends to facilitate

admission. Among other blessings of the peaceable temper, it is said (Ps. cxxxiii. 3) that God commands it to be attended with *life for evermore*. And among the things which prevent entrance into heaven, St. Paul includes "hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, and strife."

The very title, *children of God*, is a sufficient argument of their blessedness. The immense dignity, honour, and felicity resulting from this privilege, made Luther declare that if we could but affect our minds with a just and lively sense of them, it must necessarily over-whelm us with a joy which we should not be able to survive. What, then, remains, but that we are diligent in cultivating this excellent temper? Whatever may be the opinion of men concerning us, and whatever difficulties we may find in the way to peace, let us not less sincerely and less vigorously pursue it. And may the God of peace endow all of us with that wisdom which cometh from above; which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Let us in imagination, when deeds of carnage have been brought to a close, traverse the field of blood. Let us labour to count the numbers of those whose gaping wounds cannot be closed; dying in pain and thirst, and feeling that they die; thinking, if thought can be exercised, of wife or children or parents never again to be seen in this world; sent into the next state without having made-up the account of their souls. Let us pass from the field of battle, and represent to ourselves not merely villages and cities plundered by a licentious soldiery, and devoured by flames; nay whole provinces drained of inhabitants, desolated by famine, and rivers literally purpled with blood; then let us open the Gospel of Christ; and ask, If the peaceful are the children of God; who is the father of sanguinary heroes and ambitious conquerors?

§ 9. Happy are the persecuted. MATTHEW, v. 10-12. LUKE, vi. 22, 23. *HAPPY are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy are ye when men shall hate you, and when they separate you from their assemblies as unworthy of communion; and shall reproach, revile, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against*

you falsely for my sake ; and cast out your name as evil, in civil and ecclesiastical matters, on account of your adherence to the Son of Man. Rejoice ye in that day ; be exceeding glad ; and leap for joy : for behold, great is your reward in heaven : for in like manner did their fathers, who so persecuted the prophets, Moses, Elijah (1 Kings, xviii.), Jeremiah, Ezekiel ; who were before you, the ambassadors from God to them. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. Acts, vii. 51. Heb. xi. 36.)

To be persecuted for the sake of righteousness is to be evil-entreated even unto death, for unshaken perseverance in maintaining the doctrines and in observing the duties which are sanctioned by the revealed word of God. It is the cause, therefore ; and not the suffering, which constitutes the martyr.

That a religion, announcing peace among men and brotherly affection, should awaken the fires of persecution, is strange. But Christ, while apprising his disciples of these melancholy results, not only displays his own prophetic spirit, but he deters all hypocritical disciples ; and proves the divinity of the Gospel which the wrath and malice of man could not prevent from taking root.

To his disciples who were summoned, many of them, to perish by the most agonizing tortures of the most ingenious cruelty, he proposes "*a great reward in heaven*:" inasmuch as martyrdom implies the full and uniform exercise of many Christian qualities : of these, the more eminent, are, 1, faith ; 2, love ; and, 3, courage.

1. The *faith* of a martyr is that which overcomes the world. In the catalogue of afflictions which the Saints of God have endured, we find this principle of *faith* as the cause of their patient submission to mockings, scourgings, imprisonment, destitution, and death, in all its variety of painful forms. It thus realizes St. Paul's definition in being "the substance of things hoped-for, and the demonstration of things not seen:" inasmuch as it makes the future world present ; and represents the Son of Man standing at God's right hand, ready to receive and reward those who, for his sake, have despised the shame and pain of the Cross.

2. The patient suffering of persecution for Christ is a testimony of the greatest *Love*. He himself declares, that "greater

love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." In what ardent language, does St. Paul exclaim, "Shall persecution or famine or peril or sword separate us from the *love* of Christ? In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans, viii. 35.) This *love* attests its sincerity by an unequivocal surrender of all worldly enjoyments in honours, pleasures, profit, and ordinary comfort. It is a *love*, not capricious, but unalterable. While the storm of persecution is distant, it is easier to say, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" than, in the hour of peril, to make the words good. The greatest *love* of God was to die for man : the greatest *love* of man is to die for God.

3. There is no *courage* like that of a Martyr : he fears no evils but sin and condemnation. The bravery of the Duellist consists in daring to offend his Maker. The soldier is excited by the number of companions and by the tumult of the fray : and sometimes, by the hope of glory or of revenge or of plunder. Are we to suppose that of the thousands, marshalled in battle-array against each other, one-third would be present, if each individual fore-knew that he would expire on the field? But that a man should go alone, and in cold blood, to the stake or scaffold of martyrdom, when, in every step of advance, he can, by compliance, recede from his undertaking ; deliberately submit himself to certain execution ; and feel himself die with all his thoughts, reflections, and passions about him ; this is courage indeed ; and such a noble spectacle as might well deserve to be a theatre to angels and men. In this spirit the Apostles (Acts, v. 41) departed from the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of a crucified Saviour. In the same spirit, the foresight of bonds and afflictions moved not St. Paul from finishing his course with joy. (Acts, xx. 23.)

The happiness which is promised to the persecuted, and the reason for their joy under their distresses, are intimated in the words, *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and, Great is their reward in heaven.*

That there will be different degrees of reward in proportion to the measures of present exertion, is a point not to be disputed. To those, therefore, who from a pure love of God, and for the sake of a good conscience, have given up all their en-

joyments in life; who have gone through all manner of indignities, reproaches, tortures, and oppressions; who have even resisted unto blood with patience and constancy; to them is secured a bright and glorious crown by the repeated promises of Him who cannot lie. "Having come out of great tribulation, and having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; *therefore*, are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his Temple: and he that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revel. vii.)

With this view of blessedness, the persecuted have (as our Lord affirms) reason to *rejoice* and to be *exceeding glad*. Not but that they have cause for joy, even in this world, in the consciousness of having been found faithful in a trial more precious than that of gold; that their names will be enrolled in the noble army of Martyrs; and that they are, in some measure, like to the Captain of their salvation, who himself was made perfect by sufferings: but still more do they rejoice, and are exceeding glad in the assurance of Jesus, that they shall receive, for all their sufferings, a hundred-fold, in the glorious mansions of their heavenly Father's house.

Our Church, in celebrating the memory of ALL SAINTS, has quoted this Scripture in which happiness is promised to the sufferings of martyrs; and enjoins us to "pray for grace that we may follow them in all virtuous and godly living." How shall we excuse our sloth or our timidity? The primitive Christians, during three centuries, were subjected to a persecution, the details of which cannot be perused without shuddering. In more modern periods of history, the Crusades against the Albigenses swept away, from one wretched city, 15,000 Protestants. The year 1479 saw, in Spain, the establishment of the Inquisition; which removed mental error by the torments of the body. The day of St. Bartholomew witnessed a massacre, even under the mask of friendship, of 12,000 Protestants. In the reign of Louis, falsely called *Great*, the Protestants were slain and hunted, like partridges upon the mountains. Our own country has added many a sad page to

the history of persecuted and murdered Saints. Can we forget the venerable Bishop Hooper who rejected the pardon of the sanguinary Mary; and who exhorted the people, till his tongue, swollen by agony, could no longer permit utterance? We cannot have forgotten Ridley and Latimer, who perished in the same flames, and supported each other with mutual exhortations. God has not placed our salvation at so high a price: but he exacts from all a heart, humble in the midst of power; charitable, in the midst of riches; self-denying, in the midst of enjoyments. God wishes us to manifest, by a faithful discharge of our several duties, that he is the God not only of Apostles and Martyrs; but the God of every rank and condition whatever. While the Saints carried their Cross on shoulders streaming with blood; our Cross is carried in thwarting the inclinations of a corrupt heart. Happy indeed are we, that heaven should cost us so little: for if we are unable to serve God in times of peace and abundance, it is very unlikely that we should serve him better, in poverty, weakness, and disgrace. The greater and more urgent reason have we to pray, in the words of our Church, "O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow thy Blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast purchased for them that unfeignedly love thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

§ 10. Worldly prosperity is dangerous. LUKE, vi. 24-26: *Wo unto you that are rich: for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger and weep. Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did the fathers to the false prophets.*

IF blessings and curses were pronounced at Mount Ebal (Joshua, viii. 33), so at the mount on which our Lord is now seated, the word *wo* is intermingled with the word *happy* or *blessed*.

Perhaps, some persons who were rich, and lived in plenty and luxury, had come to make their remarks on our Lord's preaching, and to deride what they might hear. But, in general,

our Lord intended to shew his disciples the danger of riches, worldly indulgences, and all those ruinous advantages, which men so eagerly pursue; and of that pride and self-sufficiency which are commonly increased by prosperity. *Wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation.*

But as poverty, which is neither good nor bad in itself, does not recommend one to God, unless it is accompanied with those virtues which are suitable to an afflicted state; so riches do not make us the object of God's hatred; unless they be accompanied with those vices, which oftentimes spring from an opulent fortune, namely, pride, luxury, love of pleasure, covetousness. Rich men, infected with such vices as these, are the objects of the *wo* here denounced: and not they who make a proper use of their wealth, and possess the virtues which should accompany affluence. Wherefore, though there is no restriction added to the word *rich* in the malediction, as there is to the word *poor* in the complete enunciation of the beatitude; it is equally understood in both: *Blessed are the poor in spirit*; so *wo unto you that are rich in spirit*; you who are proud, covetous, lovers of pleasure: for ye have received your consolation. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus may be considered as an illustration both of the beatitude and of the malediction.

Wo unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger: the pains which ye shall suffer in the life to come, shall be sharp, like those which persons who place their happiness in eating and drinking, suffer from famine.

Our Lord often made use of images drawn from the pleasures and pains of this life, to represent the joys of the blessed, and the punishments of the condemned in the life to come.

Wo unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep. Our Lord's malediction is not inconsistent with the Apostle's precepts, which command Christians "always to rejoice." Neither is the mirth against which the *wo* is denounced, to be understood of that constant cheerfulness of temper which arises to the true Christian, from the comfortable and cheerful doctrines with which they are enlightened by the Gospel, the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, the hope they have of everlasting life, and the pleasure they enjoy in the practice of piety, and the other duties of religion. But it is to be understood of that turbulent carnal mirth, that

excessive levity and vanity of spirit which arise not from any solid foundation, but from immoderate sensual pleasure; or those vain amusements of life by which the giddy and the gay contrive to make away their time; that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflections. Persons who continue to indulge themselves in this sort of mirth through life, shall weep and mourn eternally, when they are excluded from the joys of heaven; and banished for ever from the presence of God, by the light of whose countenance all the Blessed are enlivened, and made transcendently happy.

It may be again observed, that though St. Luke omits some beatitudes recorded by St. Matthew, and seems to recite, in preference, the three preceding woes; yet, in a general sense, they are not applicable, because men are rich; because they are full; because they laugh; but because they place their happiness in these things: take up with them as their portion; valuing themselves by what they have in hand, not by what they have in hope. He that is rich and righteous; he that is great and gracious; he that has his hands full of this world, and his heart empty of vain pride and confidence; he that laughs when God smiles; he that expresses himself joyfully, when God expresses himself graciously:—such a man is rich in grace, who is thus gracious in the midst of riches: for to be rich and holy argues much riches of holiness.

26: *Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you.*—Wo unto you if, by propagating such doctrine as encourages men in sin, ye shall gain to yourselves the applause and flattery of the generality of men: for thus, in old times, did the false prophets and deceivers, who accommodating their doctrines to the lusts and passions of men, were more caressed and better hearkened to, than the true prophets of God.

Our Saviour does not condemn any of his disciples or ministers, who, by doing their duty, have gained a fair reputation among the men of the world; but to let us understand, how rarely it is attained. Usually, the best men are the worst spoken of. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, nor his Apostles, gained the good will or the good word of the generation in which they lived. Universal applause is seldom to be gained without sinful

compliance. The commendation of the multitude, that contingent judge of good and evil, rather attends the vain than the virtuous. The world takes effectual care, by their mockings, and reproaches, and invectives, to rescue the disciples of Jesus from the wo here denounced : *Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you.*

Yet let the thought that prosperous circumstances are so frequently a sweet poison ; and affliction, a healing medicine ;—reconcile us to adversity. Let it awaken our caution when the world smiles upon us ; when a plentiful table is spread before us, and our cup runneth over ; when our spirits are gay and sprightly ; or when we hear (what to corrupted nature is too harmonious music) our own praise from men. But wo unto us, if, by such word or deed as encourages men in sin, we shall gain to ourselves the applause and flattery of the generality of men. Let us rather labour to secure what is infinitely of greater importance, the praise of our heavenly Master, by a constant and affectionate obedience to these his precepts.

§ 11. Moral obligations of Christians. MATTHEW, v. 13-16: *YE are to be (as it were) the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost its savour and be grown insipid ; with what can it be seasoned ? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out of doors, and to be trodden under foot by men. 14 : Ye are the light of the world : a city which is set on a hill, cannot be hid. 15 : Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the corn-measure ; but they set it upon the lamp-stand, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. 16 : Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify and magnify your Father who is in heaven.*

[v. 13 : "There was a species of salt in Judea, which was generated in the lake Asphaltites, easily rendered vapid, and employed, in a part of the Temple, to prevent slipping in wet weather." A. CLARKE. See, also, BURDER, O. Customs, p. 84.]

THE disciples whom our Lord might select as his more immediate attendants, and who were not occasional hearers, must have felt these words to descend, with unusual force, into their hearts. But if exemplary holiness is not obligatory upon

Evangelists only ; let us give a general and wide application to our Saviour's admonitions by considering them as addressed to all disciples, in all ages of his Church.

Exemplary holiness, in the conduct of Christians, is enforced by three illustrations : 1, *Ye are the salt of the earth*. The virtue of salt is to season, and to give a good relish to meats ; and to preserve them from corruption. In a similar office, Christ expects that all his disciples should endeavour, by persuasion and example, to season the manners of men with the wholesome doctrines and precepts of the Gospel ; and to preserve them from the corruption and putrefaction of sin.

2. A second similitude under which Christians are represented, is *Light*. It is the duty of Christians to let their spiritual light shine forth so as to illuminate all around ; and to endeavour, by giving force to every instrument of instruction, to free men from the ignorance of darkness, and to bring them into the same glorious light, which was shining with a brilliant attraction in holiness of life. This conduct of the Apostles who obeyed the precept of their Master, was, doubtless, one cause for the diffusion of Christianity. It was seen in the lives of their converts, that the covetous, the unjust, and impure, became quite other men ; and a ready ear was given to the arguments of a religion, which, in the manners of its professors, was putting to shame the impurity of heathens.

3. A third similitude of Christians is *a city built upon a hill*. The impure lives of Christians will be the more noticed from the moral elevation on which they are placed. As in cities, some towers are more conspicuous ; so Christian kings, nobles, magistrates, and ministers of the Gospel, are especially bound to remember that many eyes are directed to the observation of their conduct ; and that their vicious examples may be quoted as an excuse by the most profligate.

The precept of making our light to be *seen* is capable of many illustrations. 1. It is evident, that disciples of Jesus must not embrace a monastic life ; but imitate their Master, who though he occasionally retired for private devotion, yet exercised his ministry in active righteousness, and went about *doing good*. 2. Not only the works themselves must be seen, but also the motives : so that the adversaries of our faith may be silenced, on observing that our labours are not Pharisaical,

but originate in a principle of obedience to God, and in a sincere desire of his approbation. 3. The very manner of shewing our light must be conciliatory : the Gospel must be exhibited in its loveliness. To stand aloof from legitimate pleasures ; to assume a sour forbidding look ; to talk in no other than scriptural phrase ; to censure violently all deviations from duty ; this is rather to conceal than to shew religion ; or at least, to give it the artificial clothing of hypocrites who pretend to more religion than they possess ; and thereby occasion false and mistaken notions of a Christian life. 4. Let us especially regard those religious duties which are of a public nature ; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is ; but eager to shew open evidences of our love for God, at those times and places which are appointed for congregational worship ; thus provoking one another to love and good works by our open avowal of faith in the great Redeemer.

The great instruction, enforced upon us by the three similitudes adduced by our Lord, is of a two-fold nature.

1. The danger of omitting the duty of exhibiting a Christian example is awful. If the salt has become insipid, wherewith shall the salt itself be salted ? A wicked heathen may be converted : but to a wicked Christian what remedy can be applied which has not been tried without success ? Some things, though degenerate, are not useless : sour wine may be used as vinegar : threadbare garments will keep out the cold : cracked coins, of gold or silver, are worth their intrinsic weight : but insipid salt is trodden under foot. Our Lord, perhaps, alludes to that species of vapid salt, which was gathered from the lake Asphaltites, and, in wet weather, was spread in a part of the Temple, to prevent the foot from slipping. Can a more contemptuous or more awakening illustration be adopted ? *Trodden under foot of men !* Who trodden under foot ? they to whom Christ assigned the loftiest eminence of dignity in his service. Those to whom the means were imparted of benefiting the souls of men, serve for no other purpose than to be trodden under the feet of reprobate spirits.

2. To enforce our virtuous example, we are reminded that it tends to the glory of God. In the prayer which our Saviour has bequeathed, one petition is, "Hallowed be thy name : " the Almighty thereby condescends to assure us, that his own divine

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glory is extended by the veneration in which his attributes are held by his rational creatures. The patience of the Saints, their abhorrence of worldly lusts, impress beholders with the conviction that God is supremely amiable. It is impossible to see Christians abandon themselves to worldly excesses, without being compelled to infer that their religion does not possess any sanctifying influence upon the heart. *Ye are the light of the world*: and sins, committed in the light, are a grievous dishonour to God, by misguiding the weak, by confirming the impenitent, and by opening the mouths of blasphemers: for what can render a human law more contemptible, than to behold it openly violated by those whose chief duty and chief interest consist in maintaining it?

And what greater, what nobler design can we propose to ourselves, than to bring glory to God? This is the end of the whole creation, which declares the grandeur and wisdom of the almighty architect: but more especially is it the end of man, who alone, in this lower world, is able actively to give glory to God by expressing his praise. Such (as the apostle directs) should be the one great purpose of all our actions: "*whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" If, by this conduct, others are induced to glorify God, not only are we instrumental in promoting the divine glory by labouring to save a soul from death; but our own reward may be augmented on account of the good works, wrought by others from the influence of beholding our light. It is the assurance of a prophet (Dan. xii. 3), "*They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.*"

§ 12. Immutability of the Moral Law. MATTHEW, v. 17, 18: *THINK not that I am come to subvert the Law and the Prophets: I am not come to subvert but to ratify.* 18. *For verily I say unto you and solemnly declare, that heaven and earth, even the whole universe, shall sooner pass away and perish, than one iota or one particle of a letter shall pass away and perish from the Law, without attaining its end.*

[If *κρηά* take its meaning from *κίρας*, horn, it may denote

the *cornicle* or small projection, which, in the Hebrew alphabet, distinguishes similar letters, as *Beth* ב from *Kaph* כ, or *Daleth* ד from *Resh* ר. BURTON considers *κεφαία* to denote, a *line*, or *stroke*, the *component part* of a letter. Our Saviour seems to say, "Not only the smallest letter [the *yod*] in the Hebrew alphabet, but the smallest tittle of a letter, shall not perish from the Moral Law, without attaining its end."]

[V. 18: "till all be fulfilled:"—*authorized Translation*. "Till all the things mentioned above take place, i.e. the destruction of the universe:" BLAIR, BLACKALL, MACKNIGHT. "Till all things which the Law requires or predicts, be effected:" DODDRIDGE. "Till all the purposes of the Mosaic dispensation are accomplished:" HOLDEN. "Whatever was typified in the Law, or foretold by the prophets:" WHITBY. "The fulfilment of legal types and prophecies is intended, as well as the establishment of the Moral Law in full honour and authority:" VALPY.]

AMEN, or *verily*, or *in truth*, was among the Rabbins an asseveration (almost equal to the solemnity of an oath) with which they prefaced a dogmatic decision: with far greater propriety our Lord adopts and often repeats the word *Amen*, inasmuch as he is *Amen*, the faithful witness, the Truth pre-eminently, and the teacher of truth.

The Jews entertained a popular prejudice, that the Messiah would introduce a law, new in some respects; but which, so far from invalidating the Mosaic Law, would elevate it to the highest degree of splendour. The Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, urged, that Jesus could not be the true Messiah; or he would not oppose those traditions which they pronounced to be an essential part of Moses and the prophets. Our Lord encounters this prejudice by affirming that in putting aside traditions, he did not abrogate the Law; but on the contrary, he came to fulfil and ratify it, and introduce a purer observance of it, than had hitherto been maintained by the Jewish Doctors.

It is evident, however, that by *the Law and the Prophets* our Saviour meant the *Moral Law*; as appears from a similar use of the phrase, in *Matthew*, vii. 12, xxii. 40; and also from the general tenor of our Saviour's discourse. Our Lord did not come to prescribe forms of political and judicial law; and the

ceremonial was cancelled and nailed to his cross. But the laws of righteousness are immutable and eternal. The whole frame of the universe might be dissolved sooner than one yod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, or the minutest subtraction from the shape of a Hebrew letter be suffered to pass, without effect, from the precepts of the moral law. These our Lord came to restore to original purity, and to quicken with new efficiency, by wiping away from them the false glosses and idle traditions of those teachers who had usurped the chair of Moses.

1. The *first* commandment enjoins the Jews to have no other God than Jehovah. The Gospel adds that to serve Mammon is an idolatry as offensive as that of Baalim and Ashtaroth.

2. The *second* commandment forbids the Jews to worship God under any corporeal form. Christ has abolished even ceremonial adoration, if too laborious and intricate; and commands us to worship in spirit and in truth.

3. In the *third* commandment, the Pharisees had debased the sanctity of oaths by many minute and frivolous distinctions, as to the nature of the object on which the solemnity of the oath was founded. In this matter, our Lord has so directed that, rather than incur the danger of profane oaths, he seems to forbid the use of oaths altogether, and to ground our credibility on our well-known integrity of character.

4. The sanctity of the Sabbath had degenerated into superstitious observances. Our Lord, by miracles of mercy wrought on the Sabbath, proved himself to be its Lord; and that acts of love are not a violation of its holy rest.

5. In the *fifth* commandment, our Saviour censures that false or hypocritical piety, by which a disobedient or hard-hearted son might refuse aid to an aged and destitute parent, on the pretence that the relief requested had already been vowed to the maintenance of the Temple.

6. In the *sixth* commandment, our Saviour not only forbids murder; but he subjects to punishment all angry, opprobrious, and intemperate language, which might occasion a stifled malice, and be the germ of future outrage. The Mosaic Law admitted retaliation: the Christian disciple must not assume the attribute of vengeance: 'I will repay, saith the Lord.'

7. If Moses condemned adultery, our Lord condemns the adultery of the heart. He places the prohibition at the root of the evil ; and makes the waters sweet, by purifying the source. Christ, by his presence at a wedding, and by the precepts of his Apostles, has diffused a sanctity over marriage : and whereas causes of divorce were frivolous, and depended on the caprice of the husband ; our Saviour admits of no separation, unless it be compulsory from matrimonial infidelity.

8. The *eighth* commandment is more than established by the injunction, " All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

9. As to the *ninth* commandment, not only are we forbidden to bear false witness against our neighbour, but to abstain from a censorious spirit : " Judge not, that ye be not judged."

10. The Jews selfishly asked, Who is my neighbour ? They deemed a Gentile to be a polluted wretch. Jesus has removed the wall of partition.

What hath thus been observed with regard to the Decalogue in particular, may be applied, in a more extensive sense, in reference to the whole Mosaic dispensation ; whose *moral code* our Lord came not to abrogate, but to establish and complete.

Our Lord has given spirituality to the carnal ordinances of the law. Inward purity is declared to be the intention of bodily ablution : true circumcision is that of the heart : all its sacrifices are the types and preludes of the one great sacrifice upon the cross. In respect of irksome and unmeaning ceremonies, the Mosaic Law is still maintained in the Church of Rome ; whose frivolous rites render Christianity more burdensome than even Judaism itself, and less apt for the promotion of vital godliness.

Christ hath perfected the moral law, by suggesting more powerful motives of moral obedience. The Jews had been honoured with many marks of divine favour : but did they know distinctly, as we, all that the love of God reserved in store for the Gentiles ? Had they equally clear conceptions of redemption, and its adjunct, sanctification ? Could they console their contrition with the promises attached to repentance ? were their affections directed towards a Mediator and Intercessor ? did they believe, on similar conviction, in the doctrines of a final judgment ; the immortality of the soul ; and the

eternity of happiness or misery? Nothing can now be added to the impulses of hope and fear.

Christ hath perfected the Moral Law by discharging the duties which he has engrafted. The simple learn more from example than from abstract reasoning. Inestimable, therefore, is the privilege of looking up to a Teacher, whom his bitterest adversaries could not accuse of sin! A greater than Moses is here. In Christ we behold a Saviour, in whose redeeming love we aspire to be included.

Christ has perfected the Moral Law by sustaining us with such spiritual succour as renders his yoke easy, and his burden light. Self-confidence is as dangerous as presumption: but the hope of success in an enterprise inspires a spirit of perseverance. The Israelite heard, "*Cursed* is he who continueth not in *all* the words of this Law, to *do* them." But if we, as the disciples of Jesus, feel ourselves insufficient, "we can do all through Christ that strengthens us." The Holy Spirit is diffused in our hearts, for encouragement under despair; for consolation in distress; for direction in doubts; for mortification of sin; for strength under the pressure of temptation.

If we advert to the writings of the Apostles, we shall find that every moral duty is inculcated and enforced by the example of Christ, and for the express purpose of glorifying his name: and thus also the moral law is continually receiving additional glory through him. If *humility* is to be impressed, "Let this mind" (saith St. Paul) "be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii.) When the same apostle recommends *meekness* and *gentleness*; what is his argument? "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 1.) When he exhorts to *unity* and *concord*, and mutually edifying assistance? "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself:" sought not his own ease and satisfaction, but the benefit of others. "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth, glorify God." (Rom. xv.) When

he admonishes Christians to *brotherly love*; to what pattern does he refer us? "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God." (Eph. v. 2.) By what example does he enforce the duty of *forgiveness*? "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. iii. 13.) How does he encourage *charity* to the poor? "So labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts, xx. 35.) When St. Peter teaches men to be *patient under injuries*; what model does he propose to them? "If, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." (1 Pet. ii. 20.) When the same apostle inculcates *universal holiness*; to what standard does he direct the thoughts of his followers? "As he," Jesus Christ, "which hath called you, is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Pet. i. 5.) Is not the same motive urged by St. John? "He that saith he abideth in him," namely, in Christ, "ought himself also to walk even as he walked." (1 John, ii. 6.) And do not the sacred writers hold up the name of Christ as the great and constant incitement to *all holiness*? "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Let God in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." (Col. iii. 17; 1. Pet. iv. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 19.)

If Christ has thus glorified, if he has thus established in its widest extent, the moral law of God, by his life, by his death, by his personal instructions, and by the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of his apostles; how fatally do those unhappy men deceive themselves who discourse of a mitigated law; who imagine that they are in any degree set at liberty through Christ, from any one obligation to universal holiness, from any one branch or particle of moral duty! "Shew me thy faith by thy works," if thou hopest to enter into heaven. If the fruits of faith do not habitually appear in thy life; thine is not a faith which will justify thee through Christ. If thy deeds are the

deeds of darkness; thou belongest to the kingdom of darkness. If thou indulgest thyself in any known sin; thou art in bondage to the author of sin. Unless with a broken and contrite heart thou fleest unto Jesus, and hast thy fruits through his Spirit unto holiness; thy end shall not be everlasting life.

§ 13. Danger of Little Sins. MATTHEW, v. 19: So great is the sanctity of the moral law which I am come to perfect, that *whosoever* (as the Scribes and Pharisees) *shall*, in his own conduct, *violate even one of the least of these moral precepts, and shall so teach other men, he shall be the least in* [excluded from] *the Gospel-dispensation: but whosoever observes and inculcates the least of these commandments, the same shall be greatest in* [admitted into] *the Gospel-dispensation.*

THE expression *shall be least in* is equivalent to *excluded from, or unworthy to enter*. So (1 Cor. xv. 9), "I am the least of the apostles" is equivalent to "I am *unworthy to be an apostle.*"

The Pharisees were notorious for making a distinction between weightier and lighter matters of the Law; and consequently had a graduated scale of guilt. But our Lord who came to establish one general rule of universal holiness, would not allow the sanctity of obedience to be relaxed by the caprices of human corruption. He censures the license, by which sinners might excuse their own guilt by referring to what they deem a greater enormity in the conduct of others, or by pleading their observance of some easier duty. This was the spirit, in which the Pharisees paid the tithe of mint and cummin, instead of observing the duties of mercy and justice.

This Pharisaical doctrine, so flattering to corrupt minds and so consolatory to easy consciences, still exists in the Church of Rome, who terms some sins *mortal*, in opposition to others that are *venial*: as if some sins, though offences against God and violations of his law, could be of their own nature such slight things, that they deserved only temporal punishment; and were to be expiated by some piece of penance or devotion, or the communication of the merits of others. The Scripture nowhere teaches us to think so slightly of the majesty of God, or of his

law. There is a "curse upon every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the Law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10); and the same curse must have been on us all, if Christ had not redeemed us from it: "the wages of sin is death." And St. James asserts, that there is such a complication of all the precepts of the law of God, both with one another, and with the authority of the Lawgiver, that "he who offends in one point, is guilty of all."

These declarations relative to the guilt of sin, are awful admonitions to any person who, Pharisee-like, thinks it enough to be exact in great points, but not in small; or who avoids great sins, but indulges in little sins.

The least sin, if we commit it with our eyes open, is equally a contempt of God's law, as the greatest. The same authority, for example, forbids perjury, and swearing: if under fear of the law, we abstain from perjury, and from the absence of that fear, swear without scruple; it is evident that the fear of God is no restraint in either case.

Without little sins, iniquity would be materially lessened. It is not every man that dares commit murder, or adultery, or open theft; but numbers of men have their oath to swear, their commodious lie to tell, or their little trick to over-reach an inadvertent neighbour. All these things keep the spirit of wickedness alive.

Little sins generally make up in number what they want in weight. Your conscience, perhaps, will not allow you to live in a course of downright drunkenness; or to talk blasphemy; but you allow yourself, without scruple, in drinking *now and then*, to excess; in loose discourse; or in taking God's name in vain. All these things you are apt to excuse as unavoidable infirmities: but if we have power to avoid them, they will be registered against you; and may make a melancholy sum on the whole, however small you may consider each separate particular. What reply would you give to your debtor, if he should tell you, that none of the articles of his debt were large; and therefore he hoped you would forgive him the whole?

A great crime condemns itself: but a little transgression is often too small an object for the eye of conscience, and escapes notice. The man who perjures himself in a court of justice, would be self-convicted: but how many of us injure our neigh-

bour's character, without feeling the least concern about it. Does it not shew the great danger of little sins, when we thus commit them, almost without knowing we commit them? But if we had suffered our consciences to have been more tender at first, we should not afterwards have been so callous.

Smaller breaches of duty will probably widen into greater. Sinful thoughts form themselves into actions, and one bad action is apt to draw on another. Let us hear the Apostle: "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is perfected, bringeth forth death;" such a death as is the portion of the wicked.

In temporal affairs, where one man comes to poverty by great neglects, a thousand are ruined by paying no attention to trifles: this expense is inconsiderable; and that expense is of no consequence. The wise man sees this easy progress; and avoids it. Let the thoughtless read a lesson in this Book of the world, if not in the Scripture; and assure themselves, that if little neglects in the management of their affairs lead to ruin in this world, little neglects in religion will as certainly lead to ruin in the next. (GILPIN.)

§ 14. Our Lord censures the fancied righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. MATTHEW, v. 20: *For I declare unto you, That except your righteousness in moral obedience shall excel that of the Scribes and Pharisees who make distinctions between the importance of duties, ye shall in no case enter into the reign of Heaven* [the Gospel-dispensation] which the Baptist and myself have lately announced. (Matt. iii. 2; Mark, i. 15.)

THE *reign* or *kingdom of heaven* sometimes denotes (as in this and in the preceding verse) the *Gospel-dispensation*, or Church; which Christ came to establish upon earth; a state preparatory to (the second meaning of the phrase) *eternal felicity in heaven*. Whoever, by moral defect, is *least in* or *unworthy to enter*, the Church on earth, will be excluded from the kingdom of God in heaven.

The alarming distinction between the Pharisees and the true subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, should induce us to

enquire, What were the defects of Pharisaical righteousness ; and what better obedience he exacts from his own disciples.

The righteousness of the Pharisees was *impure in respect to its motives*. They did everything to be seen of men. When they gave alms, they attracted publick attention : when the hour of prayer had come, they were not sorry to be surprised by it, in the midst of the street : when they fasted, they affected to look pale, that the world might see their self-denial. But of what value were all their acts of devotion or charity, when they tended to elate them with a high opinion of themselves ? What were these, in the sight of God, but so many marks of inward corruption ?

Their righteousness was *partial* in its extent. Sincerity regards the authority of the Proposer of the law ; and therefore, equally reverences every precept which he has given. The Pharisees observed those commandments which cost them the least trouble ; and these they taught the world to regard as the most important. They neglected justice and mercy ; while they scrupulously tithed mint, and anise, and cummin. They fasted twice a week ; but passed a wounded man without relieving him. They dreaded the touch of a publican, as a defilement ; and used no endeavour to reclaim him. They indulged a covetous spirit ; and making long prayers, they devoured widows' houses. They were proud of their piety, rank, and attainments. They sought the chief seats in assemblies and entertainments. They held the common people as *cursed* of God. They were punctual in sanctifying the Sabbath ; yet light and false swearing was allowed. They persecuted with extreme rigour those from whom they differed. Imperfect, indeed, was that righteousness which admitted of all this covetousness, pride, injustice, and hardness of heart.

The righteousness of the Pharisees was *external* ; and devoid of spirituality. Murder they would not commit, but did not regard as criminal an unforgiving spirit. They admitted the duty of loving our neighbour, but restricted the term to those of their own sect. They considered adultery as a crime ; but they did not resist the licentiousness of the eye and of the heart. They drew near to God, in external worship, with their lips ; but with their hearts, they were far from him. In a word, they were strangers to all that inward holiness which in the

sight of God, constitutes the essence of religion ; and to that poverty of spirit, contrition for sin, meekness, mercy, forgiveness, purity of heart, and heavenly-mindedness, which Christ has represented as characteristics of his Gospel.

One striking proof of the bad quality of their religion was *their treatment of Jesus Christ*. Behold the Son of God coming among them, pure and spotless in all things ; meek and lowly in heart ; full of zeal for God, and love for man. What was the reception given him by these religionists ? Worse, far worse, than that which he experienced from the most notorious sinners. They reproached him as a demon ; they persecuted him incessantly ; they sought with unrelenting malice, to put him to death. What a proof is this that our religion should be of the right kind ! A religion which is false, may tend only to embolden in sin, to sear the conscience, and give additional hardness to the heart. (See HORNE, iii. 361-365.)

II. To point out the defects of Pharisaical obedience, is, at the same time, to be admonished in what particulars the Christian should exceed.

He must excel in *sincerity*. He not only pretends to religion, but he practises it. His heart and his lips go together. This sincerity is founded upon the noble principle of *love*. Christians are a willing people.

The Christian must excel in *simplicity*. He uses ceremonials for decency and order : but he is loath to multiply forms, which when carried into an immoderate ritual, impede all spiritual worship ; and generate, on the part of the worshippers, a sense of weariness, and reluctance to attend upon public worship.

The worship of the Christian must be *pure in principle*. No desire of reputation, no regard to worldly interest, must be its source. Filial fear of God, affectionate regard to his name, a full knowledge of his character and attributes ;—these are the foundations of true righteousness. If it be not our chief aim to please God as our Creator, Benefactor, and Father, we want the true principle of religion.

The Christian must excel in *humility*. He does not demand from God a reward for his religious services. Though he mingles in public worship, he carries a devotional spirit into his closet, where no eye, save that of God, beholds him. In his

alms, even his right hand knoweth not what his left hand doeth.

The Christian must excel in *charity*. He says not, "This people which knoweth not the Law, is accursed." He is favourable to all men whose principles and conduct are not injurious to the honour of Christ.

The Christian knows no other standard of faith than *the Holy Scriptures*. In them, he is fortified against all false glosses and empty traditions, with which some teachers have defaced and encumbered the word of God.

The Christian must excel in *universality of obedience*. He reveres the Master who declares, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do *whatsoever* I command you.' He makes not the observance of one precept an excuse for neglecting another. You are chaste and sober; are you free from pride? do you guard against resentments? Take the complete circle of duties; and be assured that if true principle inclines you to cultivate one branch of righteousness, it will equally operate to produce in you every other Christian grace. The righteousness Evangelical is like the seamless coat of Christ; all of a piece from top to bottom; investing the whole soul.

In these and other respects, the Christians must excel the Pharisee, if they aspire to be esteemed subjects in the reign of grace on earth, as introductory to the reign of glory in heaven. What then must be the condition of the nominal Christians, who are inferior even to the censured Pharisee? Many of the Pharisees were openly clear of many scandalous vices, as adultery, drunkenness, and sabbath-breaking; and could assert that they fasted, paid tithes; and, in a measure, charitable in alms-giving. These Pharisees, if they had lived in our times, might have passed for very excellent Christians: for there are many among ourselves, who fall short of them. The greater must be our condemnation. Else, why have we more perfect precepts? why, a nobler pattern? why more powerful means of grace? why a greater effusion of the Holy Spirit? If Christ has done more than Moses, for promoting vital holiness, ought not Christians to be better than carnal Jews? (See VENN, vol. ii.)

§ 15. Our Lord forbids angry and opprobrious language. MATTHEW, v. 21, 22 : YE have heard by tradition, that your old teachers pronounced, 'Thou shalt not kill; and, whoever shall kill, shall be amenable to the Court of judgment:' but, on the contrary, I say unto you, 'Whoever is causelessly angry with any one,—for every person is his brother, shall be liable to the Court of judicature. And whoever, in causeless anger, shall say to his brother, [i. e. to any one] *Raca* [thou vain and empty fool] shall be obnoxious to the Sanhedrim; but whosoever, in causeless anger, shall say *Mōrēh* [miscreant, or, rebellious apostate] shall be obnoxious to some severer punishment excruciating as the Gehenna of fire.

IN *Gehenna* (literally, the valley of Hinnom) the idolatrous Jews had formerly caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch. (See Levit. xviii. 21; 2 Kings, xxiii. 10.) From these cruel sacrifices, the word *Gehenna* sometimes implies (as in this passage) "any extreme and excruciating punishment;" and is often used as an emblem of *hell*, or condemned reprobates. (Matt. xxiii. 33–38.) See HORNE, vol. iii. p. 19.

The phrase, *it hath been said or pronounced*, is frequently used, in the Talmud, to express any common opinion of the Rabbins, but not Scripture. The difference in our Lord's use in the phrase, is, that he does not cite mere scripture, without subjoining a comment. We therefore cannot doubt that it was the Commentators, i. e. the Jewish Doctors, whom our Lord meant to correct. (H. ROSE.)

Our Saviour had censured the Pharisees for relaxing the universal obligation of the moral law, by drawing frivolous distinctions between greater and less commandments; and by making guilt to consist in the outward action. Our Lord now proceeds to adduce instances, whereby his censure is justified. The first instance is *murder*. It seems that the Mosaic Law, *Thou shalt not kill*, was enfeebled by considering it only applicable to the violence of the murderer himself: but if he effected his purpose by any other and secondary methods, his guilt became more venial. Our Lord asserts that intemperate and opprobrious language, arising from rash unbridled passion, is deserving of punishment: to insult another by reviling words may gradually work us up into violent actions; and, at all

events, justifies the decision of St. John, "Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer." The degree of this hatred, and by analogy, the greater violation of the law of murder, is evinced by the abusive appellations, in which ill-will, malice, and wrath, find vent. The force of these must depend upon the conventional sense, attached to them in different countries. Thus *miscreant*, applied by a Crusader to an Infidel; or *dog*, applied by a Turk to a Christian; or *nidering*, applied by an Anglo-Saxon to an *utterly-infamous* man; would lose their intended virulence, when uttered by or against persons not similarly situated. The passionate terms of obloquy among the Jews must be tried by this standard: accordingly our Saviour, as the terms arise in malignity, illustrates their respective degrees of guilt by the Jewish Courts of judicature, and the several penalties inflicted by them. The Court-of-judgment, consisting of twenty-three members, who were established in every principal town, to decide petty causes; assigned the punishment of *strangling*. The Sanhedrim, the great national Council, could condemn a criminal to what was deemed a more horrid kind of death, *stoning*. But when our Lord comes to the third aggravation, he implies that it merits some severer punishment than what the Court or the Sanhedrim dispense: and therefore, illustrates it by the burnings in *Gehenna*, or the *Valley of Hinnom*; where infants had been offered, in flames, to the honour of the God Moloch. (HORNE, vol. iii. p. 109; i. 441.)

This prohibition of anger has been termed an unreasonable and impracticable precept: but the context shews that the anger, here condemned, is implacable and unrepented of. There are vices which must be reprimanded with sharpness. Our Lord himself was sometimes angry. Anger, improper in its cause, its object, its manner, its season, and its duration, must bethat which our Lord is censuring. There are different degrees of anger mentioned; and proportionable punishments annexed to each. Christ, therefore, asserts agreeably to other parts of scripture, that reviling, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, shall exclude from the kingdom of heaven. In consonance to the precept of Christ, the sacred writers give abundant proof, that causeless anger and intemperate language are highly offensive to Almighty God. "Speak not evil, one of another." (James, iv. 11.) "Let all anger and clamour and malice be put away

from you." (Eph. iv. 31.) "Revilers shall not inherit the kingdom of God." But our Saviour makes causeless anger and contemptuous reproaches a branch of the sin of *murder*, in particular. They who indulge the beginnings of passion, will be little disposed, out of any true Christian principle, to prevent the fatal consequences of it. When fire has been kindled, every thing blows it into a fiercer flame. One resentment opens the passage to another : till the end is revenge and murder. If we reflect how anger blinds the reason, carries the man out of himself ; what heart-burnings and contentions, what tumult and confusion, it creates ; what wounds and death and desolation it scatters ; what rash oaths, what horrible imprecations, what blasphemous profanations of God's most holy name ; if we reflect on these sad results of anger and contumely ; we must needs allow, that peace cannot be secured but by crushing this venomous cockatrice in the egg. Our Saviour, therefore, makes his disciples answerable for not laying restraint upon the *heart* ; "out of whose abundance the mouth speaketh." He is anxious to root up the tree, and stop the fountain. While the tree is suffered to stand, the fruit will be corrupt ; and while the spring is left open, the stream will be poisonous and bitter.

It is very weakly objected by some, that it is not in their power to withstand and quell the outrageous assaults of passion. This may be very true, if they have taken no pains for that purpose. Our passions are naturally of the unruly kind ; and in order to bring them under due command, much labour and not less skill and management are required. And it would not be amiss, perhaps, if a man were to prescribe a particular course of discipline over each of them in their turn ; during which time, besides a general regard, they should demand his especial and most particular care. This seems to have been the method of a renowned emperor ; renowned, not more for his admirable government of the Roman empire, than for the equally admirable government of himself. And if the order of his meditations was guided by that of his practice, it is pertinent to remark, that he began his home-regulation by acquiring a gentleness of behaviour and a freedom from passion.

Now, if nothing of this kind hath been attempted by those who are so ready to complain of their infirmities, as if they took a secret satisfaction in them ; all that we can collect from their

complaint is, that in effect *they charge God foolishly*; they charge that on his workmanship, which is owing to their own gross negligence.

But notwithstanding all this, it is almost impossible for them not to recollect some occasions when, upon the foresight and expectation of some quarrelsome and litigious interview, they have resolved to be upon their guard; and, by such resolution, have foreclosed and dammed up every inlet of extravagant passion. They must recollect, likewise, some other less guarded seasons, when they suffered themselves to be borne away with the tempest of rage, (and were thereby betrayed into the greatest indecencies,) upon cool reflection afterwards, they were almost as angry with themselves for their indiscretion in letting loose the reins of their fury. A virtual confession this, that it was owing to their own neglect, in not seasonably setting a watch "before the door of their lips;" and by that precaution, holding their tongues "as it were with a bridle."

We may call to mind a whole sect of philosophers, with their followers, who, by the mere power of discipline, (enforced purely by considerations drawn from the dignity of human nature, self-repose, and benevolence to mankind) entirely suppressed all the disorderly ferments of passion; and that, on the most trying occasion. But ought not a disciple of Jesus the teacher sent from God, himself God,—blush to observe that the weak and beggarly elements of philosophy should have enabled the espousers of them to reach a more sublime point in the practice of any virtue, than the divine energy of the Holy Scriptures;—those Scriptures which do not only enjoin and encourage the practice of all meekness and gentleness from the most engaging and interesting motives, but which exhibit the most perfect pattern of them in our Lord and Master; who left it too as the distinguishing mark of his true disciples, that they should love one another:—those Scriptures which will render him that reads them with a proper disposition, thoroughly furnished to every good work; with a disposition influenced by that Holy Spirit which will lead us into all truth, and incline us to all goodness. That our religion is most fit to inspire a true temper of meekness and humility, and of every other virtue, we cannot doubt; it has been tried in the times of persecution, and, like gold purified in the fire, has appeared with greater splendour, and still retained

its intrinsic worth. Unworthy are we of the blessing of deliverance from that dreadful state, if a security from danger shall encourage a licentiousness of life: rather let the consideration of that inestimable blessing, as it is a very rational, be a standing and effectual motive in our hearts, of the more punctual performance of every duty, now become so practicable and easy.

Lastly: nothing can have so prevalent a power to still all the undue agitations of passion, so apt to arise from the various connexions we have with the prejudices and passions of others; nothing so fit to induce a smooth and easy flow of temper, as a frequent application to the throne of grace, to beseech him who is "the God of peace, that his peace may rule in our hearts;" that it may be the fixed and predominant principle there. This presence with the Lord is a kind of absence from the body; an absence from all the vain imaginations, the tumult of the passions, and the sinful thoughts which they suggest. The pure and serene complacency that springs up in the soul by this intercourse with heaven, shews that here she is nearest the centre of her true happiness; where the greatest things of the earth lose all their power of attraction. The awful contemplation of God's greatness, and the sense of our littleness, but too powerfully impressed by the mortifying view of our infirmities, will soon bring us to a conviction that pride, the great source of intemperate passion, was not made for man. The due preparation of the heart to wait upon God in this serious and solemn exercise, will be of admirable use to remove far from us all malicious, uncharitable, and unbenevolent thoughts. Strange! that these should find a place in our hearts, but for an hour, against those whom we expect to be the associates of our happiness to all eternity. (BALGUY, chiefly.)

§ 16. Importance of a speedy Reconciliation. MATTHEW, v. 23-26: *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee as a matter of just complaint, 24, leave there thy offering before the altar: injuries cannot be compensated by offerings to God: go thy way, first effect a reconciliation with thy brother: and then come, and offer thy gift.*

25, *Be well-minded, and make friendly composition quickly,*

with thine opponent, whiles thou art on the way with him to the magistrate; lest, at any time, the plaintiff consign thee to the judge; and the judge, convinced of thy injustice, consign thee to the officer (who levies the fines imposed), and, on non-payment, thou be cast into prison: 26, verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt not by any means come out thence, until thou hast paid the very last farthing of the fine.

THE offering, to which our Saviour alludes, seems to be a *sin-offering*. (HORNE, iii. 283.)

The instruction contained in this passage, is closely connected with the preceding inhibition against anger; which is apt to vent itself not only in opprobrious words, but in positive outrage.

The injury, thus committed, is too often prompted by a blind, misguided, offended pride. Self-consequence has assigned to the words or actions of another an interpretation which was never intended; and the angry man seeks a sinful gratification in wreaking vengeance upon the supposed aggressor. Nor does the malignity of the feeling always terminate in the injurious deed: the mind still remains the seat of malice and ill-will: for alas! such is the corruption of our nature, that the chief reason for hating another is that we have injured him. Our wounded vanity raises before our eyes the injury even in an increased magnitude and with new aggravations.

In this iniquitous fever of mind, what course must be adopted? 'Go,' says our Lord, 'and effect a reconciliation with thy brother, if he has any just complaint against thee.' The stress of our Lord's injunction rests upon the word *any*. What the Jewish doctors restricted to *pecuniary* injuries, Christ extends to *all* offences whatever: and restitution must be made not under a cold legal compulsion, but with the feeling of brotherly love. This duty of reconciliation is founded (as far as the present scripture enforces the duty) on two motives; the one, dictated by the spirit of Christ's religion; the other, suggested by prudential considerations.

I. Without reparation and cordial concession, all our religious exercises are unavailing. In public worship, what are our hymns, but notes of thanksgiving for the bounty of God who causes the sun to shine on the just and unjust; and is thus

proposed as an object of our imitation? What is prayer, but a supplication for pardon or a petition for help? in either case, true prayer cannot be breathed from the lips of a malignant person who refuses to extend to others the indulgence which he implores.

But what our Lord has said in reference to the dispensation then observed in the Temple-offerings, is especially applicable to the Lord's Supper. It is not possible even to pronounce the words, *The Lord's Supper*, without awakening the idea of all the qualities which charity comprises. Well does our Church, in her Communion-service, thus admonish those who are anxious to be received as worthy partakers of the Lord's Supper: "If ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours; then *shall ye reconcile yourselves* to them; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness at the hands of God: for, otherwise, the receiving of the Holy Communion doth nothing else than increase your damnation." That sacred Table which under simple and affecting symbols, reflects the image of divine love; that Table which is spread to collect around it the members of Jesus Christ, his redeemed, his friends, his brethren; can such a Table admit hearts full of wrath and bitterness? Shall that altar on which we see burning the pure flame of Christ's love to man, be profaned with impure incense? In refusing to be reconciled to our brother, we become the unforgiving wretch who, though to him had been remitted the immense sum of ten thousand talents, could cruelly exact from a fellow-servant, the trifling debt of a hundred pence. To approach the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with an unforgiving and unreconciled heart, is to be insensible of all the circumstances of the season when our Saviour instituted this peculiar rite. Seated at table with his disciples, he beseeches them to love one another. He prays that they may be united in close affection, even as he himself and his heavenly Father were one. This institution of the Last Supper was closely followed by the event, of which it had exhibited the type. Then it was that Jesus, though calumniated, defends himself with mildness: outraged, he returns not injury

for injury : persecuted, he hates not : insulted, he opens not his lips : crucified, he breathes his last, in imploring pardon for his murderers.

Christ recognises those only as his disciples and friends, who fulfil his commandment : and this is his commandment ; ‘ *Love your enemies : forgive, from your heart, every one his brother his trespasses.*’ If therefore, in bringing our gift to the altar, the emblems of the body broken and of the blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins, awaken within us a salutary compunction ; let not our vanity and self-love induce us to forget that our *brother hath aught against us*. The expression of Christ implies that we may have been the aggressors : we have committed some wrong against our neighbour in his person, or in his property, or in his reputation. We hate him for no better reason than that we have injured him ; and we are aggravating our wrong, by proudly standing aloof. But instead of delaying, the express command of Christ is, *Go ; go now*. Reconciliation is an immediate duty. To-morrow, our hearts may be judicially hardened ; or whom we intend to conciliate, may have been withdrawn by death. *Leave, therefore, thy gift* (saith Christ) *before the altar : first be reconciled to thy brother : then come and offer thy gift*. The sacrifice which I demand, is that of thine injustice, vanity, self-love, pride, resentment. Offer unto God that heart, which has been purged of the leaven of malice ; a heart, in which the God of love may take up his abode ; thereby the more qualifying thee for a closer union with himself in the mansions of eternal mercy.

II. The duty of reconciliation and concession towards an offended brother has thus far been enforced by our Saviour on the ground that God will not accept the worship of such offenders against justice and Christian good-will ; and is better pleased with remorse and reparation and placability, than with sacrifices or external worship of any kind. This exhortation Jesus proceeds to enforce from the consideration of what is reckoned *prudent* in ordinary law-suits. In such cases, wise men always advise the party that has done the wrong, to make up matters with his adversary whilst it is in his power, lest the sentence of a Judge, being interposed, fall heavy on him. For the same reason, we who have offended our brother, ought to make it up with him, whilst an opportunity of repentance is allowed ; and that, though

our quarrel should have proceeded to the greatest lengths; lest the sentence of the Supreme Judge should overtake us, and put reconciliation out of our power for ever. Our case will be still more deplorable and helpless, if, by our impenitent wickedness, we make ourselves the prisoners of the divine justice. But are not many of us obnoxious to God's displeasure? If this be our condition, with what a holy solicitude of soul should we labour to make-up the controversy and come to an agreement, while we are yet in the way with this awful adversary; lest we be immediately hurried before the tribunal of the righteous Judge of all the world, and be delivered into the hands of justice, to be reserved in everlasting chains beyond the possibility of redemption?

As for those words of Christ, *Ye shall not come out, till ye have paid the uttermost farthing*, from which the Romanists would infer that there is a state in which, after we shall be cast into prison, we are paying off our debts; this, if an argument at all, will prove too much,—that, in hell, the damned are clearing scores, and that they shall be delivered when all is paid off; for by *prison* there, that only can be meant, as appears by the whole contexture of the Discourse. It is a figure, taken from a man imprisoned for a great debt; and “the continuance of it, till the last farthing is paid,” implies their perpetual continuance in that state, since the debt is too great to be ever paid off. From a phrase in a parable, no consequence is to be drawn beyond that which is the true consequence of the parable: which, in this particular, is only intended by our Saviour to shew the severe punishment of those who hate implacably; which is a sin that does certainly deserve hell, and not Purgatory. (BURNETT.)

Lord, as we were all the debtors, and, in one sense, the prisoners of thy justice: and, of ourselves, are most incapable, not only of paying the uttermost farthing, but even of discharging the least part of the debt; we bless thee for that generous Surety who has undertaken and discharged it for us; and by the price of whose atoning blood, we are delivered from the chains of darkness, and are translated into the glorious liberty of redeemed children.

§ 17. Government of Thoughts. MATTHEW, v. 27, 28 : YE have heard from tradition that it was said by the old Teachers, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' 28. But I say unto you, Whosoever shall gaze upon another man's wife, to cherish impure desires of her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.

OUR Blessed Lord, as a Teacher of righteousness, confirms the advice of Solomon, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it, are the issues of life." It is plain, that as thought gives the first impulse to every principle of action; so actions are no other than thoughts ripened into consistency and subsistence. Hence our Saviour, in alluding to the grievous crimes of murder and adultery, directs his warning against intemperate and impure thoughts, from which those enormities originally spring.

Wholesome directions are not wanting for the discharge of that important duty—the *government of thoughts*.

In the first place, study to acquire the habit of attention to thought. No study is more important; for, in proportion to the degree in which this habit is possessed, such commonly is the degree of intellectual improvement. It is the power of attention which in a great measure, distinguishes the wise and the great from the vulgar and trifling herd of men. The latter are accustomed to think, or rather to dream without knowing the subject of their thoughts. In their unconnected roving, they pursue no end; they follow no track. Everything floats loose and disjointed on the surface of their mind; like leaves scattered and blown about on the face of the waters.

In order to lead your thoughts into any useful direction, your *first* care must be, to acquire the power of fixing them, and of restraining their irregular motions. Inure yourself to form a plan of proper meditation; to pursue it steadily; and with severe authority to keep the door shut against intrusions of wandering fancy. Let your mind, for this purpose, become a frequent object to itself. Let your thoughts be made the subject of thought and review.—"To what is my attention at present directed? Could I disclose it without a blush to the world? Were God instantly to call me into judgment, what account could I give of it to him? Shall I be the wiser or the

better for dwelling on such thoughts as now fill my mind? Are they entirely consistent with my innocence, and with my present and future peace? If they are not, to what purpose do I indulge such unprofitable or dangerous musings?"—By frequent exercise of this inward scrutiny, we might by divine grace gradually bring imagination under religious discipline, instead of suffering it to be only the instrument of vanity and guilt.

In the *second* place, in order to the government of thought, it is necessary to guard against idleness. Idleness is the great fomentor of all corruptions in the human heart. In particular, it is the parent of loose imaginations and inordinate desires. The ever-active and restless power of thought, if not employed about what is good, will naturally and unavoidably engender evil. Imagine not that mere occupation, of whatever kind it be, will exempt you from the blame and danger of an idle life. Perhaps the worst species of idleness is a dissipated, though seemingly busy life, spent in the haunts of loose society, and in the chase of perpetual amusement. Hence, a giddy mind, alternately elated and dejected with trifles, occupied with no recollection of the past but what is fruitless, and with no plans for the future but what are either frivolous or guilty.

As, therefore, you would govern your thoughts, or indeed as you would have any thoughts that are worthy of being governed, provide honourable employment for the native activity of your minds. Keep knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, ever in view. Let your life proceed in a train of such pursuits as are worthy of a Christian, of a rational and social being. While these are regularly carried on as the main business of life, let amusement possess no more than its proper place in the distribution of your time. Take particular care that your amusements be of an irreproachable kind, and that all your society be either improving or innocent. So shall the stream of your thoughts be made to run in a pure channel.

In the *third* place, when criminal thoughts arise, attend to all the proper methods of speedily suppressing them. Take example from the unhappy industry which sinners discover in banishing good ones, when a sense of religion forces them on their conscience. How studiously do they drown the voice which upbraids them, in the noise of company or diversion! What numerous artifices do they employ to evade the uneasiness

which returns of reflection would produce!—Were we to use equal diligence in preventing the entrance of vicious suggestions, why should we not be equally successful in a much better cause? As soon as you are sensible that any dangerous passion begins to ferment, instantly call in other passions, and other ideas, to your aid. Hasten to turn your thoughts into a different direction. Summon up whatever you have found to be of power for composing and harmonizing your mind. Fly, for assistance, to serious studies; and especially to prayer, and devotion. By such means, you may be enabled to apply an antidote, before the poison has had time to work its full effect.

In the *fourth* place, it will be particularly useful to impress your minds with an habitual sense of the presence of the Almighty. When we reflect what a strong check the belief of divine omniscience is calculated to give to all criminal thoughts, we are tempted to suspect that, even by Christians, this article of faith is not received with sincere conviction. For who but must confess, that if he knew a parent, a friend, or a neighbour, to have the power of looking into his heart, he durst not allow himself that unbounded scope which he now gives to his imagination and desire? Whence, then, comes it to pass, that men, without fear or concern, bring into the presence of the awful Majesty of Heaven, that folly and licentiousness of thought which would make them blush and tremble, if one of their own fellow-creatures could descry it? Never let this great article of faith, *the omniscience of God*, escape from your view. Think that you are never less alone, than when by yourselves: for then *He* is still with you, whose inspection is of greater consequence than that of all mankind. Let these awful considerations not only check the dissipations of corrupt fancy; but introduce in its stead what is solemn, pure, and holy; elevating your thoughts to divine and eternal objects; and acting as the counterpoise to those attractions of the world, which would draw your whole attention downwards to sense, and vanity, and sin. (Dr. BLAIR.)

§ 18. Sinful passions must be mortified. MATTHEW, v. 29, 30: AND if thy right eye cause thee to offend or entice thee to sin, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable to thee, that one of thy members should perish rather than thy whole

body should be cast into Gehenna at the final resurrection. 30. And if thy right hand offend and ensnare thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body should be thrown into Gehenna, at the final resurrection.

THE Greek word for *scandal* implies some obstacle which occasions the walker to *stumble* or *fall*: and is often used for snare or enticement. Hence to *scandalize* is to *cause* a person to *fall into* or *ensnare into* sin or ruin.

The real purport of the figurative expressions in these verses, is, that the sinful passions must be repressed and subdued, however painful the conflict, under the terrible penalty of God's eternal displeasure. An inordinate desire is to be abandoned, though it may seem as dear to us as a right eye, or as profitable as a right hand: a corrupt affection must be vanquished, though it may be as severe a trial as to cut off the most tender and most useful limb of the body. As a gangrene must be stopped, or else death ensues; so the most favourite passion must be given up: there is no room for hesitation: it must be done: or everlasting punishment will be the consequence.

The language of our Lord, though apparently rigid and severe, is worthy of his wisdom and of his goodness: the precept is a necessary preservative against impurity, by not allowing us to encounter the danger of familiarity with sin. All irregular motions must be checked in the heart, whence they take their rise; and, by perpetual restraint, be happily prevented. The difficulty of the precept is over-balanced by the powerful motive by which it is enforced. All the sinful enjoyments of a corrupt nature are, at best, unsatisfactory; and their insufficiency for rational happiness will be still more apparent, when we meditate on their calamitous issue.

It is usually considered a matter of common prudence to part with a present good or endure a present evil; if the attainment of a future good or the avoidance of a future evil, infinitely exceed the present in degree and duration. In this point of view, the happiness of heaven is the future good,—the misery of hell, the future evil. These bear an infinite disproportion to whatever the world can offer under the names of enjoyment or suffering. If, therefore, by our self-denial, we can escape future

misery and attain future happiness,—whatever temporal inconvenience, loss, or damage, we sustain on the road, we can be no real losers and sufferers, but rather infinite gainers, at our journey's end. This is the principle on which we act, in bodily ailments: we relinquish pleasant beverages for unpalatable potions, when we are threatened by dangerous sickness: we submit to the amputation of a limb in order to debar infection from a vital part. Why are we not willing to obey the commands of Christ, in respect to the corrupt affections of our souls?

The duty which our Lord now enjoins in metaphor taken from bodily pain, may be illustrated by referring to similar passages in the New Testament. While the word *spirit* denotes the religious principle; *flesh* is another term for unbridled appetite and passion, and our tendencies not merely to sensual indulgence, but to the whole system of immoral inclinations which lead to any breach whatever of the divine Law. Thus St. Paul reckons among *the works of the flesh*, not only adultery and lasciviousness, but variance, envy, and sedition: and among the fruits of the Spirit are not only *temperance*, but long-suffering, meekness, and faith.

As there exists a connexion between different vices, even as the limbs of the human frame are mutually knit together; so St. Paul makes mention of 'the *body of sin*.' That this body should be subjected to salutary pain, is the language of St. Paul as well as of his great Teacher: he says, "*Mortify* your members which are upon the earth;" an injunction which does not merely signify, 'Treat the body with austerity; but destroy and *put it to death*.' In another place, he says, "If, through the *spirit*, ye *mortify* the deeds of the body" [unlawful indulgences] "ye shall live." In pursuance of this mortal enmity between flesh and spirit, between religion and wickedness, every serious believer considers himself as 'a soldier of Christ' (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4), whose whole life is to be a warfare against 'those lusts which war against the soul.' (1 Pet. ii. 11.)

And because the great end of our Saviour's incarnation and death, was to engage us in this good fight, and enable us to obtain the victory; therefore overcoming and sacrificing to him our unlawful desires, is, by an elegant allusion to the manner of his death (which was painful and slow, like our extirpation of them), called *crucifying* them;—not only here in the text, but

in another parallel one: 'knowing this, that our old man is *crucified* with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' (Rom. vi. 6.) Whence also our apostle saith further, that 'by the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ,' by the example of his sufferings, and the grace which they have procured, 'the world is *crucified* unto him, and he unto the world.' (Gal. vi. 14.) He regards it no more than the Jews did our Saviour, when they condemned him to the most ignominious torments; but hates it mortally, and despises it utterly, so far as it is sinful: and is content, that, in return, it should hate and despise him, rather than comply with its wicked customs.

This, then, is the true Christian mortification. And the figures describing it, are indeed remarkably bold and full of energy: but they are accurate, instructive, animating; and, alas! but too necessary, to convince unthinking and unwilling creatures as we are (prone to explain away into nothing every precept we can) of the zeal and severity, with which we are to extirpate all that is faulty within our souls. The commands of our blessed Lord himself carry in them the same force: 'if our right hand offends us, to cut it off; if our right eye, to pluck it out:' (Matt. v. 29, 30; xvii. 8, 9; Mark, ix. 43, 45, 47) if any desire we feel, will be a probable occasion of our falling, to suppress it, however dear; if any action we are engaged in, to quit it, however advantageous in other respects. And the reason he adds, admits of no reply: 'It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands or two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire:' it is better to undergo the most painful self-denial here, and be recompensed with heavenly felicity hereafter, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and suffer the vengeance of the Almighty for ever.

Our Christian profession strongly binds us thus to mortify continually every immoral appetite and passion. 'They that are Christ's, have *crucified* the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' 'The grace of God, which bringeth salvation,' not only 'taught' but enabled us, 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' (Tit. ii. 11, 12.) They, who are Christ's in name only, bind themselves to this: they, who are in reality his, perform it. 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is

none of his :’ (Rom. viii. 3) and ‘the fruits of the Spirit,’ we are told through the whole scripture, are the pious movements of a good heart, and the actions of a good life. Our blessed Lord ‘gave himself for us, that he might sanctify and cleanse us, and present us to himself holy, and without blemish.’ (Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.) If then we labour not to become such, we frustrate, so far as our own concern reaches, his gracious intentions, and make his sufferings vain. If we *crucify* not our affections and lusts, ‘we *crucify* him afresh, and put him to open shame;’ (Heb. vi. 6) pour contempt on his glorious undertaking ourselves, and expose it to the scorn of others : the consequence of which will be, that, as ‘while we profess to know him, in works we deny him,’ (Tit. i. 16) so will he in the day of judgment ‘profess to us, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’ (Matt. vii. 23.) Still it should be observed, that so far both good and bad Christians are his, as to be always under his dominion. ‘None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself,’ exempted from his authority ; ‘whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s;’ (Rom. xiv. 7, 8) but the wicked continue under his government, just as upon earth rebels continue subjects ; not entitled to benefits from their prince, but liable justly to sorer punishments than his other enemies. Think then, will you be ‘Christ’s at his coming,’ (1 Cor. xv. 23) only to have ‘vengeance taken of you in flaming fire;’ (2 Thess. i. 8) or to ‘enter with him into his glory?’ (Luke, xxiv. 26.) If the latter be your choice, the only way to it is, that you think it not too much to *crucify* your flesh figuratively, renounce and destroy your forbidden desires, however painful it be, for him ; since he thought it not too much to let his flesh literally be *crucified* for you.

If, therefore, we are anxious to live after the spirit and not after the flesh, let us betake ourselves, in earnest and constant prayer, for a blessing upon our own sincere endeavours, to the influence of the Holy Spirit : whose benevolent office it is to purify the soul from the defilements of sin. Let us not grieve him by obstinately persisting in the corruptions of the flesh. Knowingly and wilfully to continue in any habit of transgression, is to forsake the Holy Ghost. It is not only to refuse to obey the influence of the good Spirit of God,—it is to follow the guidance of the evil spirit, the adversary of God, the devil. It is to

provoke the Holy Ghost to depart from you ; to cast you off ; to abandon you to yourself, and to the dominion of the powers of darkness. Keep, then, your heart diligently, that neither wrath, nor envy, nor hatred, nor impurity, nor covetousness, nor deceit, nor discontent, nor pride, nor worldly anxiousness, nor any other unchristian disposition, may harbour there. Review, from time to time, your outward conduct, that you may discover, whether you are indulging any practice unbecoming a servant of the Lord Jesus. Endeavour, day by day, to grow in grace ; to gain more and more the mastery through the Holy Spirit, over your remaining corruption. Then will he preserve you under his care. He will advance you in spiritual understanding, in spiritual strength, in saving faith, in moral attainments. He will make you more and more meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and will seal you unto the day of redemption. (SECKER.)

§ 19. Adultery the only cause for Divorce. MATTHEW, v. 31, 32: *It is a tradition* (Deut. xxiv. 1) *Whoever would dismiss his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce*: 32. *But I say unto you, that whosoever shall dismiss his wife, except on the account of adultery, causeth her, by a second marriage, to commit adultery : and whoever shall marry her after she is thus unlawfully divorced, committeth adultery ;* since the bond of the former marriage does, in the account of God, remain undissolved.

THE two great expounders of the Mosaic Law, were Schammai and Hillel. The Hebrew word which, in English, is rendered by *uncleanness* (Deut. xxiv. 1) was applied by the doctors of the Schammai School to *adultery*: those of Hillel extended the word to any defect whatever in person, disposition, and behaviour ; and to any matter of arbitrary unfounded dislike. (See HORNE, iii. 362 and 412.) Thus a man might dismiss his wife, if she displeased him in the dressing of his victuals ; or if he could procure a handsomer woman. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says, " About this time, I put away my wife who had borne me three children, *not being pleased with her manners.*" The same historian says, " He that would

be disjoined from his wife *for any cause whatever*, let him give her a bill of divorce." By the terms of this legal document, the dismissed wife was declared free, at her own disposal, to marry whomsoever she pleased. This abuse in multiplying the causes of divorce far beyond the intention of Moses, Jesus thought fit to reform, by correcting the law itself. Accordingly, in reference to the original institution of marriage in Paradise, and upon the laws of that relation then established, our Saviour then assured his disciples, that he who divorces his wife for any of the causes allowed by the doctors, whoredom excepted, layeth her under a strong temptation to commit adultery. The dismissed wife is exposed, for want of subsistence, protection, and comfort, to the necessity of availing herself of what the legal bill of divorcement allowed,—another marriage. But if the divorce had been made without a just cause, it is no divorce in the sight of God: the obligation of marriage is still in force: so that both parties, thus separating, commit adultery by marrying again; as do the persons likewise whom they marry.

Our Saviour, by thus restoring matrimony to the original design and purpose of God, namely, an unbroken and permanent compact between one man and one woman, and by forbidding all capricious arbitrary reasons for divorce, has promoted the moral happiness of society. If mothers can be divorced at pleasure, the right education of children, the future hopes of the community, would be neglected. The succeeding wife would esteem the children of her predecessor to be so many rivals; and would naturally be anxious to pilfer and purloin by making some provision, in aid of her own probable dismissal. No motive sufficiently strong would occur towards composing those little differences which, in our imperfect state, will occasionally ruffle the most placid tempers: so that old age would advance, unalleviated by the thought of past endearments and of mutual friendship.

That our Saviour forbids all other causes, except adultery, for the adoption of divorce, is a sufficient testimony to the heinous guilt of infidelity to the marriage-bed. These breaches of plighted faith, as they must be preceded by a want of sufficient conjugal affection in the offending party; so they tend to extinguish all the remains of it: and this change will be perceived, and will give uneasiness to the innocent one, though

the cause be hid. But if it be known or merely suspected by the person wronged, it produces from the make of the human mind, in warmer tempers, a resentment so strong,—in milder, an affliction so heavy,—that few things in the world equal either. For “love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire.” (Cant. viii. 6.) And with whatever vehemence they burn, inwardly or outwardly, it can be no wonder; when perfidious unkindness is found in that nearest relation, where truth and love were deliberately pledged, by the most solemn compact; and studiously paid on one side in expectation of a suitable return; and when the tenderest part of the enjoyment of life is given up, beyond recall, into the hands of a traitor who turns it into the acutest misery. To what a height, grief and anger on one side; and neglect, ripened into scorn and hatred, on the other,—may carry such calamities, cannot be foreseen: but, at least, they utterly destroy that union of hearts, that reciprocal confidence, that openness of communication, that sameness of interests, joys, and sorrows, which constitute the principal felicity of the married state.

Against such mischiefs, there is no better antidote than love, mutual love, a true conjugal love; a love, grounded not upon the satisfying meaner appetites; for that will be of no long continuance; but established upon the lasting principles of duty, and fed by pious considerations. And they who think, that no less authority hath joined them together than God himself; who intended that this union should be great, and withstand all temptations of dissolution, except that of death; and who thought fit to represent it by the love of Christ to his Church; they who make these considerations the foundation of their love, will not easily be moved to the desire of separation.

Love, in a married state, being grounded only upon beauty, riches, and external things,—when these fade, love will fade. Virtue, and the fear of God, and the oath which is betwixt them,—these must tie their hearts together; and where they effect that union, their love, like a triple cord, is not easily broken.

Love is a universal medicine. If the infirmities of one party be invincible, love will bear with them: if vincible, love will endeavour to reform them. If crosses happen, love will administer comfort; if prosperity flows in, love will exhort to

thankfulness. If disputes arise, love will appease them; if misconstructions, love will rectify them; if failings, love will cover them. Where this love decays, there the good Angel that should guard the house, prepares for his departure. Temptations prevail; differences arise; ill thoughts enter; harsh and unkind language is uttered; a thousand evils, adulteries, and fornications, intrude; and thus the married state becomes bitter as wormwood; which, if submitted to the regulations of Christian wedlock, might have been sweet as the morning-rose, fragrant as the balm of Gilead, refreshing as evening-showers. (SECKER. HORNECK.)

§ 20. Oaths forbidden. MATTHEW, v. 33-37: AGAIN: *ye have heard from tradition that it was said by the old teachers* (Levit. xix. 12; Deut. xxiii. 21), "*Thou shalt not perjure thyself; but shalt perform unto the Lord thy oaths and vows:*" but this commandment is not confined to such oaths as do not expressly use the name of God. 34. *But I say unto you, Swear not at all* in your common conversation; *either by heaven; for it is the seat and throne of the glorious God; 35, or by the earth; for it is the foot-stool of that throne: or by Jerusalem; for it is the city which contains the Temple of the great King of the universe. 36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head,* which belongs more to God than to thee, *who canst not make one hair white or black. 37. But let your assertion be yes, yes; no, no:* preserve such an habitual regard for truth, that your simple affirmation or denial may be deemed equivalent to a formal oath; *for whatever is more than these,* whatever exceeds a simple affirmation or denial, *arises from the suggestions of the evil one,* and must produce bad consequences.

* THE *old teachers* are the successors of Moses, as legislators.

The words *yes, yes; no, no,* are forms of assent and negation, recommended by the Jewish teachers; and our Lord thus far commends the simplicity of their language: but at the same time, they had become extremely lax in the permission of oaths. The prohibition, contained in the third commandment, was pronounced not to extend beyond gross perjury, and the breach of the solemn vows made to Jehovah: but any oath, provided it

did not include the name of God, was considered venial and allowable. Our Saviour here mentions various oaths, then most common among his countrymen (see *LIGHTFOOT*): but as they all implied some relation to God as the great Creator and Lord of all things, they were, in that sense, so many appeals to God, and therefore involved in the guilt of profaneness.

As our Saviour in the preceding prohibition, alludes to the oaths used in common conversation, he has not banished them from courts of judicature: our Lord himself, when the High Priest adjured him by the living God, answered the appeal. But the multiplication of oaths in our jurisprudence, and the irreverent manner in which they are administered, occasion immense guilt, and are an enormous evil, even exceeding all calculation.

But if our Saviour forbids the oaths which apparently are silly and unmeaning; with what greater force does his prohibition apply to the profane use of taking God's holy name in vain, in idle conversation, without any becoming reverence of his majesty!

Profane swearing may be termed at least an unreasonable practice, because it is destructive of all those purposes which it intends to serve. Does the swearer expect to be more believed from his oath? The very use of oaths may excite a suspicion, that there is no sincerity at bottom, and that the swearer himself does not think his bare affirmation to be worthy of regard. If the subject of conversation be true, it does not need an oath; if it be doubtful, it will not bear an oath: so that, in all discussions, an oath is not an argument of anything but of folly in the user. A man is not believed from his oath; but the oath, from the man: so that a person of known integrity will gain more belief from a nod of his head, than others by a million of imprecations.—Or, shall oaths be considered as the mark of wit, or of brilliant fancy, or of lively conversation? That invention must be very barren, and that fancy very beggarly, which craves the assistance of blasphemy. Can that be legitimate wit, which the most stupid idiot can exercise? Suppose that, instead of oaths, we interlarded our discourse with silly expletives and insignificant words: would that be graceful? how, then, can it be more graceful to use impiety in the place of absurdity?—Or, is swearing a mark of courage? True courage

is cool and temperate, and does not vent itself in blustering conversation. To affront the Almighty is not courage, but a real instance of cowardice, in not daring to perform our duty to him.—Or, does swearing enforce authority? Blasphemy can frighten none but those whom it is unmanly to affright. It is more than probable that the very lowest of our inferiors would be tempted to curse again, and thereby throw down those barriers which their profane superiors had intended to maintain.

The causes whence swearing originates, and the excuses which are thereby urged in its defence, are so many aggravations of its guilt. Sometimes it arises from drunkenness, spoiling the temper, and transforming men into wild beasts. Sometimes, from gaming, which, by sudden and irretrievable loss, excites blasphemies and execrations. Sometimes it arises from unbridled passion : as if the impulse of hasty rage would apply as an excuse for any other crime. Sometimes it arises from levity of mind, disposing a man to sport with anything how grave and venerable soever. But with whom in sport ? in sport with him who makes heaven and earth to tremble at his nod : is he a fit object of sport ? Sometimes from apish imitation of a current fashion ; as if the customs of the world should overpower the dictates of conscience and religion. Sometimes it arises from inadvertence, occasioned by long habit ; as if guilt could be extenuated by the constant recurrence of it. It always arises from some defect of conscience, some want of reverence to God, and sober regard.

There is neither pleasure nor profit to be reaped from this ungodly practice. They who are most addicted to swearing, can give no reason why they so often commit this abominable sin ; they freely acknowledge, that there is in it neither pleasure nor advantage. Other sins have one, if not both these temptations, to captivate mankind ; they either satisfy some sensual appetite, or gratify some covetous desire or profit ; at least they hope to find their account in it. But the swearer gives away his soul for nothing. Of all offenders he makes the worst bargain ; gives himself up to everlasting pains and sorrows for that which no one advised or tempted him to, nor approved of ; and which he himself never liked whilst doing, nor remembered afterwards with any satisfaction or content. Let any one call to

mind the many oaths and profanations of God's holy name he has been guilty of, and see if he is either the richer, wiser, or better esteemed. And who would continue in a practice that brings with it neither pleasure nor advantage? Indeed, *what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* But it is still worse to lose his soul for nothing. In all other offences, men aim at some end, and have some motives and temptations thereto: but in this there is no end or temptation, so that a man is condemned by himself and every other person.

An oath is a most religious thing; we acknowledge by it God's omniscience and omnipotence, and declare that he knows the very secrets of our hearts; that he can and will punish us, if what we affirm is not true, or that we intend not to perform what we then promise. An oath is the solemn calling on God to bear witness, that what we utter with our mouths, we in our hearts believe to be exactly true; and entreating him to punish and take vengeance on us, if we intend not what we say and promise. The heart of man lies secret to all the world; that therefore we may know whether a man speaks true or false, an oath was appointed; by which we appeal to God as a witness, that our heart and mouth agree; or if they do not, it implies, that we desire God to take vengeance on us, and punish our impiety to him, and falsehood to man. Can anything be more serious and religious than a solemn oath? So that every time we take an oath, by anything relating to God, we call God to witness the truth of what we say, and to revenge himself on us if it be false. Let all then remember the serious nature of an oath. It is an awful and a solemn appeal to God by oath, as the searcher of hearts, and as the avenger of the perjured. Hence, by oaths, treaties are confirmed between nations; by oaths, subjects are bound in loyalty to their rulers; by oaths, the nuptial league is ratified; by oaths, decisions are made upon the lives, estates, and reputations of men. But what can more weaken this binding influence of oaths, than the common and irreverent use of them? A true fear of God is an habitual principle: it is therefore difficult to conceive, how a man's dread of God can be so constituted as to make a conscience of swearing in one place, and no conscience of swearing in all other places. The dread of an Almighty Avenger being once removed, the most sacred

of all obligations will be made the most effectual means of committing injustice. Human laws will prove too weak, when those of heaven are disregarded. The bands of civil society will be snapt asunder; and every man will do what is right in his own eyes.

Let us consider the crime of profane swearing, in reference to God. The principal part of divine worship is to bear in our minds an habitual veneration for God, as the supreme disposer of all things. The first petition in our daily prayer is, that 'the name of God may be hallowed' or sanctified: and if we offer this prayer with sincerity of heart, we cannot but allow that we are bound to display, in every action, a zeal for God's honour. Can it then be allowable to intermix his reverend name in all the follies of our idle and sinful talk? is it fit that we should introduce on light occasions the name of God and of his Christ, the mention of his meritorious wounds, and of the blood which was shed for our redemption? Must the tongues which were given for praise and prayer, be employed in oaths and execrations? It is difficult, therefore, to conceive a more heinous offence than thus to offer indignity to that great Being, whose claims to our affection are numerous as his mercies; and whose demands upon our respect are proportioned to the infinity of his power to crush both body and soul.

To what particular punishments profane swearers are obnoxious in this life, is not declared; but their sin is so provoking and presumptuous, and has so little temptation to it, that they have much to apprehend. The prophet tells us, "*because of swearing, the land mourneth;*" the land was then afflicted with several plagues and heavy judgments, by reason of the frequent oaths and perjuries among the people. And I dare say, many among us are afflicted, blasted, and undone, by this audacious contempt and profanation of God's name, who little think from whence the curse and secret canker came. And how should it be otherwise? Will God bless those who daily take his name in vain, defy his laws, and curse him to his face; who call for vengeance on themselves and others, almost every word they say? Can they expect a blessing, who scarce ever mention God, but in the way of blasphemy; and make few other prayers than for plagues and mischiefs, damnation and eternal wrath? How merciful is God, that he does not grant what

these poor wretches so earnestly ask him! But let such be assured, that without sincere repentance and leaving off their sin, however God may forbear them in this world, he will most certainly, according to their own curses and repeated wishes, condemn and confound them in the world to come. Those prayers that came from hell, which pleased their ears and filled their mouths so often, shall be heard, to send them to accompany those cursed spirits, on whom they have so frequently called. Let them then remember, that it is a dreadful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God; who has declared, *he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.* (BEVERIDGE, BARROW.)

§ 21. Patience under slight Injuries. MATTHEW, v. 38-42. LUKE, vi. 30. *Ye have heard by tradition that it hath been said by ancient teachers, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'* (Deut. xix. 21.) *But I say unto you, that ye do not retaliate upon the injurious person; but accustom yourselves to bear common injuries: So that if any man, in a spirit of insult and contumely, strike thee on the right cheek, rather than return the blow, offer the other to him also. And to any one who purposes to sue thee at law, and take away thy tunic, give up to him thy mantle also. 41. And if any one, by compulsory violence, press thee to go with him one mile; go with him two. 42. Give to every man that asketh thee, where thou hast reason to believe it is a real charity; and do not turn away him that would borrow of thee; and of him that taketh away thy possessions in an injurious manner, do not demand them either in a judicial manner, or to the detriment of charity and mercy.*

THE *mantle* or *upper garment* (mentioned in v. 40) was a loose square piece of cloth wrapped round the body. (See HORNE, vol. iii. p. 393.) In v. 41, our Saviour alludes to royal couriers, who in conveying the king's commands, might *compel* into their service, any horse, vessel, or carriage they might need. (BURDER, Orient. Cust. p. 160.)

To appreciate this passage aright, we must bear in mind that among the ancient heathens, private revenge was indulged without scruple and without mercy. The savage nations in America, as well as in almost every other part of the world, set

no bounds to the persevering rancour, and the cool deliberate malignity, with which they will pursue, for years together, not only the person himself from whom they have received an injury, but sometimes every one related to or connected with him. The Arabs are equally implacable in their resentments; and the Koran itself, in the case of murder, allows private revenge.

But were the Jews, the people of God, exempt from the influence of this intemperate passion?

As the phrase *Ye have heard that it has been said* denotes that the Mosaic law to which our Saviour alludes in passing, had been corrupted by the traditions of ancient teachers, so we infer that the law of retaliation had not escaped their perverting and corrupting comments. The law of retaliation, as enacted by Moses, appears to have been rarely, if ever, strictly put into execution: but the injurious party was to give the injured party satisfaction. It should seem, that, in the time of Jesus Christ, the Jewish Doctors had made this law (the execution of which belonged to the *civil magistrate*) a ground for authorizing private resentments, and all the excesses committed by a vindictive spirit. Revenge was carried to the utmost extremity, and more evil returned than what had been received. On this account, our Saviour prohibited retaliation in his divine Sermon on the Mount. (HORNE, vol. iii. p. 187, and i. 446.)

Revenge is so opposite to the placable and forbearing disposition which Christ came to establish, that he opposes his authority to the decisions of the Rabbins, who, even in slighter matters, had encouraged revenge. Thus to a box on the ear; to a blow on the cheek; to pulling the ear; to the plucking the hair; to each of these petty acts of violence, an appropriate fine was assigned. But in these and some other cases, adduced by our Lord, he forbids us to resist, and not to seek the compensation which the Jewish Doctors awarded; a compensation which, in fact, might be sought, not in the cold propriety of legal process, but with a malignant and rancorous spirit.

At the same time, we are authorized to infer from the very examples which our Saviour mentions, that this forbearance and compliance are required only when we are slightly attacked, but by no means when the assault is of a capital kind. For it would be unbecoming the wisdom which Jesus shewed on other points, to suppose that he forbids us to defend ourselves against murderers, robbers, and oppressors, who would unjustly take away

our life, our estate, or our liberty. Such concessions could not possibly answer any one rational purpose ; nor conduce in the least, to the peace and happiness of mankind, which were certainly the objects which our Saviour had in view : on the contrary, it would tend materially to obstruct both, by inviting injury, and encouraging insult. Neither can it be thought, that Jesus commands us to give every idle fellow all he may think fit to ask, whether in charity or in loan. We are only to give what we can spare, and to such persons as, out of real necessity, seek relief from us. Nay, our Lord's own behaviour towards the man who, in presence of the Council, smote him on the cheek, gives reason to think he did not mean that, in all cases, his disciples should be passive under the very injuries of which he here speaks. In some circumstances, *smiting on the cheek, taking away one's coat, and the compelling of him to go a mile*, may be great injuries ; and therefore, are to be resisted. The first instance was judged so, by Jesus himself, in the case mentioned. For had he forborne to reprove the man who did it, his silence might have been interpreted as proceeding from a conviction of his having done evil, in giving the High-Priest the answer, for which he was smitten. Wherefore, it is plain, that the expressions of *smiting on the cheek, taking away the coat, &c.* are of the same kind with those v. 19, namely, *the cutting off the right hand, and the plucking-out the right eye* ; and denote something less than they literally import. Admitting this explication as just, our Lord's rule has for its object *small* injuries, under which our Lord orders his disciples to be passive, rather than resist them to the utmost. Viewed in this light, his precept is liable to no objection : it being well known that he who bears a slight affront, consults his honour and interest much better than he who resists or resents it ; because he shews a greatness of mind, and uses the best means of avoiding quarrels, which are often attended with the most fatal consequences. In like manner, he who yields a little of his right rather than go to law, is much wiser than the man who has recourse to public justice in every instance : because, in the progress of a law-suit, such animosities may arise as are inconsistent with charity.

The present inconveniences of suffering a light injury can be but small to the injured person ; consisting wholly in a little self-denial, and in mortification of his pride and passion ; which are much more tolerable than what follow upon the ways of con-

tention. As to future inconveniences, it will generally be found, that the revenging of one injury brings on another. The one is the withdrawal of combustible matter, the other continually furnishes oil and gunpowder and whatever is apt to spread the fire of contention.

Let us, who are the disciples of Christ, abhor contention and revenge; nor govern ourselves by those false maxims of honour which pride and self-love have introduced on the ruins of real Christianity. Let us cultivate that peculiar *temper* and *disposition* which the Gospel requires; that patience, gentleness, mildness, moderation, and forbearance, under injuries and affronts, which is best calculated to preserve the peace of our own minds, as well as that of the world at large; which tends to soften resentment and turn away wrath; and without which, on one side or the other, provocations must be endless, and enmities eternal. All that is here required is plainly and simply this, that we should not suffer our resentment of injuries to carry us beyond the bounds of justice, equity, and Christian charity: that we should not, as St. Paul well explains this passage, *recompense evil for evil* (Rom. xii. 17), that is, repay one injury by committing another; that we should not take fire at every slight provocation or trivial offence, nor pursue even the greatest and most flagrant injuries with implacable fury and inextinguishable rancour; that we should make all reasonable allowances for the infirmities of human nature, for the passions, the prejudices, the failings, the misapprehensions of those we have to deal with; and, without submitting tamely to oppression or insult, or giving up rights of great and acknowledged importance, should always shew a disposition to conciliate and forgive; and rather to recede and give way a little in certain instances, than insist on the utmost satisfaction and reparation that we have, perhaps, the strict right to demand. Let us not, even in the most legal methods, seek the punishment of those who have wronged us, except in circumstances in which we are in our conscience persuaded it will, on the whole, be greater charity to animadvert on the offence than to pass it by; and even then let us act in a calm and dispassionate manner, pitying and loving the persons of the injurious, even while, for the sake of society, we prosecute their crimes. (PORTEUS. MACKNIGHT.)

§ 22. Love of Enemies. MATTHEW, v. 43-47. LUKE, vi. 27-35. YE have heard that it was said by our old teachers, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour* (Lev. xix. 18); and your teachers have thence wrongly argued as if it had been added, *Thou shalt hate thine enemy*. 44. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies; return kind words to those who revile and imprecate: do good to them that hate you; and pray for the conversion of them who despitefully use you and persecute you*: 45, *that ye may by imitation thus approve yourselves to be the children of your heavenly Father: for he causes his sun to arise on the bad and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust*. 46. *For if ye only love them that love you, what reward have ye? what can ye expect for that of which even wicked men are capable? for sinners and heathens also love those who love them: do not even the despised publicans the same?* 47. *And if ye salute and embrace your brethren only, of the same sect and party, wherein do ye excel? do not even the publicans so?* Luke, vi. 33. *And if ye do good to them who do good to you, what thank have ye? for heathens also do even the same. And if ye lend to those of whom ye hope to receive in return, what thank have ye? for heathens also lend to heathens, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great: and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.*

OUR Saviour proceeds to point out the defective interpretation which the Scribes and Pharisees assigned to the Law of Moses in relation to the spirit of benevolence and general charity. Moses had said, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*: but *hate thine enemy* was a comment that had no foundation (if any) except tradition. The political prohibitions which Jehovah had issued against all associations with idolatrous nations, had been perverted by the Jews into the obligation of personal hatred, and the denial of common civilities: so that it was unlawful for a Jew to keep company or go unto one of another nation. It was a duty to refuse to guide a wanderer into the right road, or to direct him, in his thirst, to a neighbouring fountain; or even to rescue him, when in danger of being drowned. As to the publicans or gatherers of the Roman imposts, their very office rendered them odious; and this hatred was increased by their

rapacity and extortion : hence they were considered as *robbers* and *assassins*. But Christ condemns this uncharitable spirit : *I say unto you, Love your enemies.*

This precept has often been misunderstood, by making it comprise more than what is practicable in the nature of things. It is evident that as the actions and qualities of men are often as opposite to each other as light and darkness ; we cannot regard, with esteem and complacency, the perpetrators of wickedness, even if they were not our personal enemies : the love, therefore, of enemies is a general benevolence and an enlarged good-will. Lest this doctrine might appear visionary, our Lord points out the manner and the motive which should attend obedience to his precept.

By our *enemies*, whom we are commanded to love, are to be understood those who without any considerable provocation, are our enemies ; for those persons, who by pride and moroseness, by lying and slandering, by ingratitude, by over-reaching, by any scandalous and provoking behaviour, make to themselves adversaries, are not prepared to receive, or even to understand, this precept ; there are many previous duties which they must learn to perform. The Gospel requires of us, first, that we should do to others as we expect that they should do to us ; and then, as the completion of all, that we should love even those perverse and unreasonable persons, whose good-will we cannot obtain by the most obliging and inoffensive behaviour.

The love which we are commanded to have for God, our relations, our friends and benefactors, our fellow-citizens and strangers, and our enemies, cannot but be different in degree : but because, in this case, under pretence of reserving for adversaries, the lowest degree of love, we may afford them no small degree of hatred ; we should carefully consider in what behaviour, love towards enemies is manifested.

Ill-usage which we have not deserved, is very provoking : but our anger must be brief and harmless. We must not indulge a secret displeasure by meditating continually upon the injuries which we have suffered ; lest it should take full possession of us, and be turned into a confirmed hatred and malice. We must not act according to the first impulses of passion, which will vent itself, if we be not cautious, in contumelious

language. *Bless those who curse you.* Civility in our discourse is required from us even to our rudest persecutors.

There are few who set not a value upon themselves, which an impartial examiner would think excessive. We should therefore reject, as a dangerous temptation, any opportunity of punishing our enemies by our own power and authority; but leave it to God, who is the God of Vengeance; or to the Magistrate, who is the Minister of God. And it were to be wished that Christians would leave their cause oftener in the hand of God, and seldomer in the hand of the Magistrate, and not seek the revenge which they frequently pursue upon slight provocations. Every one, who pretends even to the name of a Christian, ought to be contented if he can obtain his own; and if that be impossible, as often it is, he should never desire to vex and oppress those who have wronged him, when he can propose no advantage by it, except the inhuman pleasure of making them miserable.

We must forgive our enemies. Our Lord hath commanded us to declare to God, that *we forgive those who trespass against us.* To forgive them implies somewhat more than to abstain from revenge; it is, to wish them no evil; but to behave ourselves towards them on all occasions, where Christian benevolence is required, as though they never had offended us.

We must pray for our enemies. "Pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you." To shew the sincerity of our charity, we are obliged to express it where all dissimulation must be of dreadful consequence, in our prayers to God for their amendment and welfare. And that our conduct may not contradict our devotions, we must do good offices to our enemies, when it lies in our power, and is consistent with our duty to society: *do good to them that hate you.*

If you love them only that love you, do not even the publicans the same? The very worst of mankind usually acknowledge themselves obliged to reward one kindness with another. But if we confine the feelings of benevolence within the narrow circle of friends, sect, and party; we are evidently governed by principles of self-love, worldly interest, and a prudent regard for our comfort, subsistence, and security. In proof of our sincerity in professing to refer our actions to the dictates of pure and

enlarged religion, it is necessary to obey the precept of Jesus, *Love your enemies.*

1. Of the *reasonableness* of this duty there would be no occasion for proof; were not men so prone to consult their passions, instead of their understandings. Have we been hardly used, and injuriously treated, without provocation, and without cause? But what then? If others have acted wrongfully; can this be a reason for our acting foolishly? If they have been unreasonable and perverse, must we needs follow their example? It is doing that very thing, which a Christian will always endeavour to prevent, as far as lies in his power. For what can be more agreeable to his holy profession, than to keep evil, as much as possible, out of the world; and when it is in, to use all proper means to drive it out? Instead of this, as enmity lets it in; so revenge keeps it there, and propagates it. The one opens a door for it; and the other holds it open and widens it.

But perhaps it may be urged, that all injuries and wilful wrongs are actions criminal in their own nature; and ought in reason to be punished accordingly. But by whom? Not by us; who neither know how to do it; nor have any right to undertake it: but by him surely, "to whom vengeance belongeth;" and who alone is qualified to execute it rightly. Besides, this dangerous plea may recoil upon our own heads. If we insist rigorously on the punishment of all wrongs and indignities; do we not, in effect, pass sentence against ourselves? Have we not all frequently and grievously offended the Divine Majesty? And do we not therefore continually stand in need of his mercy and forgiveness? On this account, we ought to take special care that we do not preclude our only plea, and overturn the foundation of all our hopes. Especially since we are assured that what measure we mete to our fellow-creatures, will be measured to us again by our common Creator and Supreme Judge.

2. The *excellence* of this virtue is evident from its peculiar conformity to the divine example. By befriending our enemies, we become imitators of God's universal goodness; and in the noblest sense, "children of our Father which is in heaven;" who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." His blessings are

scattered without distinction, on friends and enemies, the righteous and the wicked. And not only the common blessings of life are thus communicated ; but for us all, even "while we were sinners, and when we were enemies," he graciously provided the means of reconciliation and redemption, and "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And what a pattern has our Redeemer likewise set us of this divine virtue ? He has shewn greater love, and greater friendship to his enemies, than any other person ever did, or ever could do, even to the dearest friends : to enemies fierce and cruel, obstinate and implacable ; and who impiously deprived him of that life, which was both employed, and laid down, for their sakes. In a word, for his enemies he lived and died ignominiously, and wretchedly ; in pain and poverty, misery and torment. Thus was his precept fully exemplified in his own practice ; who thereby shewed us, that the greatest abhorrence of sin is perfectly consistent with the greatest kindness and compassion for sinners.

3. The *advantages* which redound from the practice of this duty, are most evident, both *in respect of society*, and every individual. Innumerable broils, feuds, contentions, animosities, would be hereby either prevented, or soon stopped. Such a habit, such a disposition, when rooted in the minds of men, would grow up into a firm bank against the overflowings of ill-will, and the inundations of strife. The wrongs that were done, would slide away gently, without spreading, or giving much disturbance to the community ; and in a little time be swallowed up and lost in the wide ocean of charity.

And as to the *private advantages* arising from the discharge of this duty, they are great and unquestionable. Benevolence is a never-failing source of the purest pleasure. And when it is exercised towards enemies, yields a delight of the most heavenly nature. To conquer a wild affection, and quell a mutinous passion ; to maintain, against all opposition, the authority of the Gospel, the empire of reason, and the majesty of truth ; affords a Christian more solid joys, and more durable triumphs, than all the world about him can equal. Though injuries may strike, or even wound him ; yet these wounds never fester or corrupt, as in the case of an ill habit ; but are healed by the balsamic virtue of his own mind : they seldom either bring much smart with them, or leave a visible scar behind them. To

which must be added, that the hardest hearts may relent, and be won, by patience, gentleness, and good-will. This virtue not only mollifies rugged dispositions, but melts them into kindness and compassion. In short, were it duly practised, would give a truer idea of the happiness of heaven, than ever the world was yet blessed with; and contribute more than any thing else to render us, as far as human infirmity will permit, "perfect as our Father which is in heaven, is perfect." (JORTIN. BALGUY.)

§ 23. Imitation of the divine Perfections. MATTHEW, v. 48: *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

LEST any should be discouraged by this command of *perfection*, it will be necessary to bear in mind, that the Scripture contains many exhortations of the same nature. It was God's command to Abraham, "Be thou *perfect*." It is the design of the Gospel to present every one *perfect* in Christ Jesus. (Col. i. 28.) It is the prayer of Epaphras that the Colossians might stand *perfect* in all the will of God. St. Paul entreats the Corinthians (2 Cor. xiii. 11) to be *perfect*, and urges the Hebrews to go on to *perfection*. So that the command of endeavouring after perfection is not among the once-mentioned things: but the question is, What is meant by it?

In the injunction "Be ye perfect *as* your Father in heaven is perfect," the particle *as* does not import equality; but only a similitude or imitation *in kind*. The highest attainable perfections of the most excellent creatures in the universe, are infinitely mean and imperfect in comparison of God, who "chargeth even his angels with folly, and the heavens are not pure in his sight." How much more weak and of no value, must the best performances of frail, mortal, and sinful men, of necessity be! But though all that we can possibly do, must needs fall infinitely short of our most perfect pattern, yet we are indispensably obliged to be like it in our proportion, and according to our capacity; and as a finite *can* resemble infinite, so we are to resemble God, by partaking of the same excellencies *in kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferior in *degree*.

A candle, though its light bears no proportion at all to the light of the sun, yet it resembles it nevertheless in giving light ; whereas darkness is directly contrary to both : so the virtues of angels and of men, though they bear no proportion at all to the adorable perfections of God, yet they resemble them nevertheless in being of the same nature and kind ; whereas wickedness is, in its whole kind, a state of contrariety, opposition, and enmity. A perfect and most complete example is set before us for our imitation, that aiming always at that which is most excellent, we may grow continually, and make a perpetual progress in the ways of virtue ; and though we can never come up to our pattern itself ; yet it is sufficient that we may justly be said to become like unto God, when, as the apostle expresses it, we “are made partakers of the divine nature ;” and such imitation of God, as our frail and mortal nature is capable of, is truly and in a proper sense the comparative perfection of our human nature, as absolute perfection is the perfection of the divine.

This may suffice for explication of the words in general. But then more particularly, *perfection*, in the scripture phrase, and as it is recommended to us as a duty, to be pursued by us in imitation of God, may be exemplified in four special virtues or excellencies.

1. It signifies sometimes *purity* and *holiness* ; a being separated from, and raised above, worldly and sensual desires ; the “keeping ourselves unspotted from the world,” as St. James expresses himself ; and fixing our affections upon divine and heavenly and spiritual things. Thus (1 Pet. i. 15), “As he which has called you, is holy ; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.” Which words are taken out of the Book of Leviticus, where they are repeated three several times, to the children of Israel ; and answer to that precept which God had before given to Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1), “I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou *perfect*.”

2. In some other places of Scripture, the word, *perfection*, signifies our conforming ourselves to the example of our Saviour, in *suffering patiently*, when God calls us to it, and parting with all things willingly for his sake. Our Saviour himself is described to have been made “perfect by sufferings.” (Heb. ii. 10.)

In prophesying of which beforehand, he expresses it in the same phrase (Luke, xiii. 32), "I do cures to-day and to-morrow; and the third day I shall be *perfected*." And warning his disciples of the persecutions they must expect to meet with, he tells them (Luke, vi. 40), "The disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is *perfect*, shall be as his Master;" that is, as it is explained in the parallel place (Matt. x. 24), must expect to be persecuted like him. And giving instruction to the young man, who desired to know what he must do to be perfect; "If thou wilt be *perfect*," saith he, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me."

3. In other places of scripture, because *universal love* in the highest and most exalted degree; forgiving of injuries, and doing good even to our bitterest enemies, is one of the great improvements and excellencies of duty which the Christian religion has introduced; and wherein it exceeds all other institutions of religion that ever were in the world; therefore this also is sometimes styled *perfection*; and the practice of this duty is called *being perfect*. Thus the words of the text seem, in their first and most literal sense, to be understood, by their connexion with what goes before. For when our Saviour had commanded his disciples (v. 44), "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" he adds immediately in the words of the text, "Be ye *therefore* perfect, as your Father which is in heaven, is perfect;" that is, Imitate ye *therefore* this excellent perfection of God; and as *he* does good even to the unholy and unthankful, so do *ye* forgive and do good even to your enemies; for this is the perfection of the Christian state.

4. Perfection in other places signifies *mercy and goodness*, works of charity and beneficence; which the Christian religion recommends to us with the greatest earnestness, with the most pressing arguments, and with the amplest promises of an exceeding great reward. This interpretation of the word, St. Luke (vi. 36) authorizes in the parallel place to the text; where, repeating the very same discourse of our Saviour; instead of these words, "Be ye, therefore, *perfect*, as your Father

who is in heaven, is *perfect*," he expresses it thus: "Be ye, therefore, *merciful*, as your Father also is *merciful*." And St. Paul, speaking of the same excellent duty of charity, calls it the "bond of perfection:" "And above all these things, put on *charity, which is the bond of perfectness*." (Col. iii. 14.)

Thus to imitate the perfections of the Deity, is a duty necessary, because *commanded*: but it is not wanting in other motives. Whom are we enjoined to imitate? *Our Father*. And is it not the duty of children to imitate their great Parent, unless they are insensible to the honourable appellation, *Sons of God*? And where is the *residence* of our Father? *In heaven*. His abode is a strong claim to our affectionate obedience; due to the gracious condescension of the exalted Jehovah, who, from his throne of glory, regards the children of men. The mention of his abode reminds us of the kingdom, where he now reigns; the kingdom which he reserves for the *perfect*; and where Christ our chief reigns also. We are not Christians, unless we tread in our Saviour's steps; but how can this be done but by imitating our Father who is in heaven? Such was the conduct of Jesus. "The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do: for what things soever he doth, these also doth the Son likewise." Christ loved, as God loved. Christ was merciful, as God was merciful. He was the express image of his person; of his nature; of his perfections. And if this was our Saviour's work, we cannot imitate that Saviour, except we endeavour to be "perfect, as our Father who is in heaven, is perfect." (DR. S. CLARKE, chiefly.)

§ 24. True motive in the discharge of Duty. MATTHEW, vi. 1: TAKE heed that ye perform not your religious duties before men generally, in order to be observed by them: otherwise, ye will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

IN this sermon, it seems our Lord's manner to introduce instructions regarding particular duties, by some general sentiment or admonition which is illustrated or exemplified in them all. Thus at verse 20 of the preceding chapter, after the general warning, "Unless your righteousness excel that of the Pharisees," there follows an illustration in regard to murder,

adultery and divorce, swearing, retaliation, and the love of our neighbour ; the scope of every one of these being to enforce the doctrine, with which he had prefaced those lessons. As our Lord had thus shewed the extent of the divine, he now shews that the virtue of the best performances may be annihilated by a vicious motive, such as vain-glory. His general admonition on this head, is illustrated in three particulars : alms ; prayer ; and fasting.

The direction with regard to the first, is, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise, ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men ; verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when *thou* doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly."

In the same manner with regard to prayer ; the rule is, "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men ; verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Lastly, a similar precaution applies also to the act of fasting : "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance ; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast ; verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

In all these passages, the point to be noticed is a strong and marked disapprobation of everything that looks like ostentation, parade, vain-glory, insincerity, or hypocrisy in the discharge of our Christian duties. They shew in the clearest light, the spirit and temper of the Christian religion, which is modest, silent, retired, quiet, unobtrusive, shunning the observation and the applause of men, and looking only to the approbation of Him

who seeth every thought of our hearts, and every secret motive of our actions.

They establish this as the grand principle of action for every disciple of Christ, that in every part of his moral and religious conduct, he is to have no other object in view but *the favour of God*. This is the motive from which all his virtues are to flow. If he is actuated by any other; if he courts the applause of the world, or is ambitious to acquire, by a show of piety, a character of sanctity among men, he may perhaps gain his point; but it is *all* he will gain. He will have his reward here; he must expect none hereafter.

As our Lord's censure is not directed against the abstract duty of alms, and prayer, and fasting, but against the vanity and ostentation by which they are moth-eaten and corrupted; let us direct our attention to the general question, By what means may we avoid, in all our religious duties, the blighting sin of vain-glory?

1. Let our religious duties be performed out of affection to Christ. "*The love of Christ constraineth us,*" says St. Paul, "because we thus judge, that Christ died for all; that they which live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." We, like St. Paul, must be incited into action by considering the great benefits conferred upon us by Christ: but if we act to promote some worldly interest, to gratify a sinful desire, and procure praise for ourselves;—such conduct is not based upon the love of Christ.

2. Let our religious duties be performed in our quality as *the servants*, agents, and stewards of Christ. We are his servants by nature, as our preserver; by purchase, as our Redeemer. We have, therefore, no business properly our own: but "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; for ye serve the Lord Christ."

3. Let our religious duties be discharged under the sense of acting by the commission and *authority of Christ*; regulating all our actions by his law and the rules of his Gospel. Worldly ostentation will not then be mistaken for Christian charity. To affix the name of Christ to any action which is not truly conformable to the spirit of his Gospel, is as great an abuse as to stamp the king's image upon tin and lead, instead of gold and silver.

4. Let our religious duties be discharged in *imitation of Jesus*, and in conformity to his practice. In his conduct, what an absence of vain-glory ! Let us imitate his retiring from the scene of his benevolence ; and his love of secret prayer. Let us labour to resemble him in all imitable perfections ; asking ourselves, "What did my divine Master in this case ? Am I herein his disciple and follower ?"

5. Let all religious duties be performed, in acknowledging the *acceptance* of them to be built upon Christ, and the rewards of them to be bestowed only for his sake. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. To act on any other principle of reward, is already to have received it in the payment of our own self-sufficient vanity. Is the righteousness of man profitable to God ? Out of our whole flock, we cannot select a victim so pure, as God may justly require at our hands. All our actions need to be commended and adorned by the well-pleasing performance of Christ. In his name, our prayers must be offered up : and to pray with other feelings is to represent unto God our own meritorious performances as the ground of our access to God, and the foundation of some fancied claim of reward.

Lastly : Let our religious duties be performed from a consciousness, that the *power of acting* is derived from Christ. When the vain-glorious man is trusting in what he deems his own natural strength, he is leaning on the broken reed of pride. Our Saviour has declared that without him, we can do nothing. He is the vine ; and we are the branches. To proclaim our own sufficiency, is to proclaim our weakness. If the branches are not inserted in the parent-vine, they derive no vital moisture ; they droop, they languish, they fall ; and are fit for no other end than to be consumed in the fiery indignation of that God, who looketh unto the poor in spirit. His eyes are averted from those who pompously display their alms-givings. His ears are closed to the proud and carnal devotions ; but willingly are they opened to the penitent who, standing afar off, in some retired recess, and discarding all self-righteousness, humbly exclaims, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." (BARROW. PORTEUS.)

§ 25. Vanity forbidden in Alms-giving. MATTHEW, vi. 2-4 :
 WHEN therefore thou performest thine alms-deeds, do not (as it

were) *sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in places of public concourse and in the streets, that they may be applauded by men: Verily, I say unto you, they have received their reward.* 3. *But when thou art doing thine alms, use the utmost privacy; and let not thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing: 4, that thine alms may be performed in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, and knows thy most retired actions, will himself reward thee openly before the assembled world.*

The word *Hypocrite* (in verse 2) literally means *actor*; one who, on a stage, performs a part or character, which does not belong to him as a private person.

Our Saviour having directed a general condemnation against vain-glory in our religious obedience, proceeds to adduce several instances in which that false and corrupting principle too often intrudes. The first of these is *alms-giving*.

The Pharisees were ostentatious in alms-giving. It does not appear from any of the Jewish writings, that it was customary for the Pharisees to sound a trumpet in order to summon the poor receivers: but they are censured, by a proverbial expression, for performing their charity in a noisy manner, and in public places; so as to attract the notice and admiration of the casual passengers and spectators. Such donors as regard the relief of their own vanity rather than of the wants of the destitute, "*have their reward.*" They gratify their own vain-glory. They catch the applause of the ignorant. They augment their worldly reputation as liberal persons: their ear is pleased by the empty sound of human praise: and there, the matter ends. The compassion was not founded upon the love of God, or simple sympathy with the sufferings of his creatures: and, therefore, from God, as the final judge of human actions, they will not receive the very slightest approbation.

Not that Christ forbids the public expression of charity. In numerous cases, to suffer one's name to be inscribed on a list for public inspection, imparts a sanction to the plan proposed, and conciliates the Christian co-operation of others. But our Saviour contrasts the alms of the ambitious Pharisee and of the modest Christian. The Pharisee seeks a crowd and (as it were) a public theatre for his deeds. The Christian looks up to God. So secret and private are his alms, that they are almost unknown

to himself: his left hand knoweth not what his right hand doeth. He is the still stream whose course cannot be traced but by the verdure and fertility imparted by its waters. His theatre is the retired abode of the indigent and the sick. His applauding spectators are his conscience and his God.

It appears that alms-giving is, in itself, a bounden duty: but that a wrong mode of discharging it may be its canker-worm. He truly gives, who while he extends his hand to a suffering brother, elevates his eye and mind to the God of all mercy. This secret reference to God implies the exercise of many Christian qualities: while the illiberal is incapable of true piety. Where is *faith* in God, if we cannot trust him in our lending to the poor? Where is our *love* of God, if we shut-up our bowels from a brother in need? Where is our *fear* of God, if we neglect his exhortation to charity? Where is our religious *gratitude*, if we cannot spare something in honour of him, from whom all our possessions are derived? Where is our *conformity* to God's nature, unless we are merciful as he is merciful? Where is our Christian *humility*, if abundance place a barrier between us and our fellow-creatures? They who are truly charitable, charitable in the purity of their motives, shall be rewarded openly, even before an assembled world. "Come, ye blessed of my Father: enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" forasmuch as your Christian aid was extended on the principles of true charity, your relief of the hungry, your visits to the sick, were favours seemingly conferred on the immediate receivers: but ye bestowed them on Me. '*Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*'

He from whose lips these consoling words will issue, was a perfect example of the quality which he inculcates upon his followers. Who in conferring mercies, was more retiring and unobtrusive than Jesus? Frequent was the injunction which he laid upon the objects of his compassion, '*See thou tell no man.*' The cripple at Bethesda knew not who his benefactor was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away. When our Lord had sent the blind man to the pool of Siloam (John, ix.) he did not wait until the man returned to give thanks. In his benefactions, as the Creator of the world, we know not the secret agency by which harvests are ripened, and the bodies of men are sustained by food. In the work of grace wrought upon the soul, we feel

the change, but see not the mighty cause ; nor do we wist how much we receive from his daily mediation.

Let then the example of our heavenly Teacher instruct us to do good (as it were) by stealth. To do alms in secret, is to offer a double sacrifice ; of charity and of self-vanity. Unhappy is the man who, in parting with his worldly wealth, deprives himself, by self-gratification, of the heavenly riches. What has been given to God, ought to be kept hid in him. He who seeks any other approbation, forgets that he is made only for God, and that he ought ultimately to refer all things to him. Let us wait with patience. To trust in God is to enrich ourselves for ever.

§ 26. Reasonableness and Advantages of Prayer. MATTHEW, vi. 5 : *WHEN ye pray.*

THESE few words of our Lord clearly imply that whatever might be the defects of his disciples in prayer, they did not wholly omit this religious exercise. What is the general nature of prayer ? and what are the general motives for its observance ? These subjects of meditation may form a suitable introduction to a more minute consideration of that devotional form which our Saviour has prescribed for our instruction in the holiest and most important of sciences.

Certainly nothing is more reasonable than that we, who know that "every good and perfect gift cometh from above," should acknowledge, that it doth so, by looking up to that Being "from whom our help cometh." In a word, they that are sensible of their dependence every moment upon God, ought to perform such acts as are expressive, in the most significant manner, of that dependence. Now prayer is the most significant and expressive of our dependence upon him ; since not to pray, would imply, that what is conveyed to us was not of free grace, but a matter of undisputed right. Nothing is more deeply riveted in human nature than a spirit of self-sufficiency and independency ; and nothing is more requisite to beat down this spirit than prayer. When we are praying, we either do, or ought to consider ourselves as so many malefactors met to

implore the mercy of our great Judge : and what can lower the pride of man more, than such a consideration ?

Prayer is the best expedient to compose our passions. We must not pretend it is impossible to govern our passions. For what we can govern in the presence of a king, or any great man, that we may certainly do by the consideration of the presence of the King of kings. And yet it is a melancholy truth, that thousands, who act a part with great applause on the public theatre of the world, would not for a great deal, that mankind should see what they act behind the scenes, when withdrawn from the eye of the world into privacy and retirement. The misfortune is, we do not habituate ourselves to a vigorous sense of God's presence. Now, prayer supplies this defect ; it sets God before us, makes us consider ourselves as acting immediately under his all-seeing eye, and possesses our minds with a lively reverence of a Being, "who is about our path and about our bed, and spies out all our ways." Constant attentive prayer best preserves this regard and reverence for an invisible Being ; just as a constant correspondence cherishes the affectionate remembrance of an absent friend, and revives those impressions which length of time would wear out and deface.

Devout prayer has a tendency to beget in us those very graces and virtues for which we pray, and an abhorrence of the vices against which we pray for protection. When we pray that the venerable image of our Maker may be stamped upon us, the divine perfections are necessarily presented to our contemplation ; and we are fired with the noble ambition of drawing nearer and nearer to them, by greater degrees of resemblance. When we contemplate the deformity of vice, under the actual sense of the presence of God, we cannot but form the most steadfast resolutions to abandon it. When we view the beauty of holiness, as our Creator's glory, and lift up our souls to him in ardent prayers, to adorn us with it, we must feel our hearts warmed with the love of it, and lay ourselves under the strongest vows of adhering uniformly and invariably to it. When we give full vent to the ardent breathings of our souls after the love of God, gratitude to him, and confidence in him ; these pious affections are immediately awakened, and strengthened in some degree in our hearts. When we indulge ourselves in frequent and ardent prayers for the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and

we consider them as a part of the same great family of God, with ourselves ; as partakers of the same nature, as liable to all the same dangers and distresses, as groaning under the same darkness of understanding, disorder of heart, and violence of passion ; it will be impossible for us not to love and pity them with the greatest tenderness.

Further : prayer puts us into the best frame of mind for receiving the influences of heavenly grace. The soul, when duly softened and humbled by prayer, feels and sees in quite another manner than when it is hardened and puffed up with pride and vanity. A deep sense of our ignorance disposes us to follow every ray of light, how small soever : whereas, pride of understanding shuts out the light, and turns away the attention from it. We should therefore consider prayer, and exercise ourselves in it, as the great means appointed by God for drawing down that wisdom from above, which is necessary to guide us to our higher country, and to settle us in eternal rest and happiness, in our Father's house.

True devotion likewise raises the human soul to an uncommon pitch of grandeur and elevation. The perfections of the Deity, his universal and eternal Providence ; the dignity and immortality of the human soul, whereby it is capable of endless improvements ; these are objects of such an exalted nature, that they must ennoble the mind employed in contemplating them. All worldly and transitory things must appear unworthy the pursuit of that soul, which is raised above all created things, and which aspires to that happiness, which arises from the love and enjoyment of the great Creator of all. There is no greatness of mind equal to that which springs from the divine ambition of aiming at a resemblance of God ; and from the glorious hope of seeing him as he is, in some future period of existence. " Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

True devotion gives a wonderful strength and firmness, to the soul which is under the full influence of it. That man must adhere with inviolable constancy to whatever is great or good in life, who is animated with the hope of the friendship, protection, and assistance, of the great Ruler of all things. No difficulties, no dangers can terrify him, who has that great Being on his side,

who is alone the sovereign disposer of all events. No temptations of pleasure or profit can allure him who trusts in an almighty friend, who is able to make him happy in ten thousand methods beyond what he can conceive. Every worldly thing vanishes at the presence of him, before whom the world is as nothing, less than nothing and vanity. Even death itself is stript of all its terrors, to the pious man ; when it is considered only as a removing that veil of flesh, which interposes betwixt him and the invisible world. Nay, death itself is desirable ; as it discloses new scenes of wonder and delight ; and admits the devout soul to the more immediate presence of God, where there are ' rivers of pleasure for evermore.'

On opening the Book of God, we read the most encouraging exhortations to prayer, by contemplating the happy result of prayers. By the prayer of Abraham, a guilty city would have been saved, if it had contained *ten* righteous persons. By prayer, Moses more than once averted the divine anger, both from Pharaoh, and from the Israelites. By prayer, Job turned aside, from his three friends, the displeasure which God had conceived against them, for their injustice towards that holy man. By prayer, Hezekiah obtained both the deliverance of Jerusalem, and a prolongation of his own life. By prayer, the apostles received new testimonies of the divine protection over their ministry. By prayer, Cornelius the centurion, already a partaker of divine graces, drew down a still more abundant measure. By prayer, the assembled disciples obtained the deliverance of Peter, whom the tyrant Herod had cast into chains.

If we need a still more illustrious example towards establishing the necessity of prayer, nothing more is requisite than to advert to the conduct, in this respect, of our Blessed Lord. If he retired into the desert, it was for the purpose of prayer. He passed whole nights in this holy occupation. He placed one of his chief delights in prayer. He prayed, during his life ; he prayed, on the nearer approach of his sufferings ; he prayed, during his agony ; he prayed, upon the cross. If Jesus, holy, innocent, and without spot, has so strongly enforced the practice of prayer, how can we dispense with this pious exercise ? we who, from the sins of which we are guilty, and from the infirmities by which we are surrounded, are hourly subjected to the most pressing wants both of pardon and of assistance. Our

Blessed Lord must have wished, that Christians should pray ; since he has bequeathed to them a form of prayer. He has recommended prayer : " Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you." He hath instructed us by the most impressive parables, that " men ought always to pray, and not to faint." He has encouraged us to this holy duty by the gracious promise, " Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

The apostles never cease to place before our eyes this commandment of their Master. They enjoin that we should " continue in prayer ;" that we should be " sober and watch unto prayer ;" that " supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ;" that we should " pray without ceasing : " that is, that we should pray daily, habitually, on all suitable occasions, keep our mind and thoughts in a praying frame. They recommend prayer as the covenanted means of obtaining whatever is really necessary for us, and of banishing from our hearts every cause of disquietude. " If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." " Ye lust, and have not, because ye ask amiss." " Be careful for nothing : but in every thing, by supplication and prayer, let your requests be made known unto God." It is the benevolent office of the Holy Spirit to assist our infirmities in prayer. It is the express command of God that we offer thanksgiving and pay our vows to him : and so important is this obligation that 'to pray to God' or 'to call upon God' is, in scripture-language, the same thing as 'to walk religiously before him.' At his right-hand, is seated the one great Mediator, ever ready to commend the prayers of the faithful by the perfume of his all-sufficient merits. To that powerful intercession, let us commend our devotions, in ardent anticipation of the better time, when the voice of supplication shall be converted into the accents of eternal praise.

§ 27. Secret Prayer. MATTHEW, vi. 5, 6 : *AND when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites : for they are wont to pray, standing in places of concourse, and in the corners of the streets, where several ways meet ; that they may be viewed by men, as persons of singular piety : verily, I say unto thee, that, in this admiration, they have all their reward. 6 : But*

thou, O my disciple, when thou prayest, enter into thy retired apartment: and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.

To *stand* was the usual posture of the Jews, at the time of prayer. They *knelt*, in times of extraordinary humiliation.

Our Saviour is here speaking, not of public nor of family worship, but of secret and private prayer. In regard of this latter duty, our Lord censures the Pharisees in two respects: 1, their spirit of vanity and ostentation induced them to utter, in public, the devotions better suited for the retirement of the closet; 2, and the prayers themselves were disfigured by all manner of idle, vain, and foolish language.

The canonical rules of the Jews required certain prayers to be pronounced at certain hours. The Pharisees artfully contrived to be caught (as it were) by these hours, in places of concourse, and in the streets: and hence had an opportunity of displaying a supposed devotional spirit. "I observed the Rabbi Jannai standing and praying in the street of Trippor, and repeating an additional prayer at each of the four corners." This custom is still observed in many of the Mahomedan and Romanist countries. (BURDER, *Or. Cust.* p. 367.)

This defect of the Pharisees must be carefully avoided by the Christian, who is anxious to be noticed and approved by him only, before whom, as into the bosom of his friend and father, he pours out his whole heart. He seeks not the market-place; but enters into his closet. Every Jewish house had a place for secret devotion, a small room over the porch; usually mentioned, in the New Testament, as "the upper room." But in holding private communion with God, a field, a garden, or a mountain, may be as retired as a closet: they are consecrated by Christ's own conduct: and wheresoever the heart can be lifted up to God, without man's observing it, the Christian may properly offer his prayers; though in the most public concourse of cities, camps, or courts. The pious heart is a retiring place, always private, always at hand, and ready to receive us. Great indeed are the advantages of public devotion; but, in some respects, they must yield the pre-eminence to closet-prayer; particularly in this, that they are not so well calculated, to

procure ease and repose of conscience to the sinner, and to adjust particular accounts between God and our souls. For it is of special use to this purpose, in these three respects; as it affords us the best opportunity of being fixed, fervent, and circumstantial in our addresses to God.

When we pray in private, we are placed immediately under the eye of God, which awes us; but under no other eyes, and in the neighbourhood of no other objects, which might divert or discompose us: we are at liberty to employ that part of our time in the performance of this service, when we find ourselves best disposed for it; to make choice of our own thoughts, and our own words; such, as are best suited to our present necessities, and desires: and what is thus passing within ourselves, we cannot but perceive, and attend to. We may break off from the duty, whenever we find our attention flags, and return to it at a more seasonable opportunity.

Nor are we capable, at such times, of being more fixed only, but likewise more fervent and inflamed. True religion is ever modest and reserved in its demeanour, when it appears in public; jealous of doing anything that may savour of vanity and ostentation; unwilling to allow itself in any such earnestness of speech, or singularity of behaviour, as may call off the eyes and ears of others to observe them; it contents itself, for the most part, with a composed and serious look, with a simple and unaffected carriage. But when public regards and restraints are taken off, the pious soul may then allow itself in the highest fervours of devotion, and in a suitable vehemence and warmth of expression.

There is yet another great advantage that attends our private devotions; they give us leave to be as express and particular as we please in our representations. In the church, the sinner and the saint, men of all ranks, distinctions, and attainments in virtue, must join in the same common forms: and though each of them may, by a sudden glance of the mind, adapt the general words to his own circumstances; yet one branch of the service presses too fast upon another, to admit of any pause between them. And they, therefore, who lie under the load of any particular guilt, rise not from their knees with so much comfort, as they would have done, had they been at liberty to dwell upon it, and confess it in all its aggravations. This liberty their

closet, and that alone, can afford them. There they may expatiate as much as they please upon their wants and unworthiness: there they may pour out all their complaints to God, and lay open all their griefs and fears, and send up all their thanks and acknowledgments: there importunities are not forbidden, repetitions are not unbecoming; but they may persist, knocking till it is opened to them, and asking till they have obtained.

These are some of the many spiritual advantages, which religious retirement, well employed, will be sure to afford us. God grant that we may all thus employ it, as we have leisure and opportunity. Amen. (BISHOP ATTERBURY.)

§ 28. Vain Repetitions in Prayer. MATTHEW, vi. 7, 8: *BUT when ye pray, do not use a vain multiplicity of words, as the heathens do in the invocation of their deities: for they think they shall be heard for their speaking much. 8. Be ye not, therefore, like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye want, before ye ask him.*

THE Greek word, which in a free translation, might be rendered by *to Battologize*, or *to use vain repetitions*, is said to be derived from one *Battus*, an inferior poet; who wrote foolish and prolix hymns, full of vain repetitions and tautology.

This defect, when occurring in prayer, might be somewhat allowable in a heathen, whose teachers were of opinion that Jupiter himself did not know things casual and fortuitous; nor was of so inquisitive a nature either as to attend to all things, or imagine that they concerned him. The heathens, therefore, might be induced to pray in a prolix and importunate form, in order to impart to their God what he did not know; or to inculcate what he might not presently attend to; or to remind him of what he had forgotten; or that he could be wearied into compliance. Thus the priests of Baal exclaimed from morning to night, "*O Baal, hear us.*" (1 Kings, xviii.) The tumultuous assembly at Ephesus exclaimed for two hours, "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*" (Acts, xix.) So the Romans: "Pious Antonine, the Gods preserve thee: gentle Antonine, the Gods preserve thee: gentle Antonine, the Gods preserve thee."

Vain and importunate repetitions are without excuse in a Christian; since they imply that God is either insensible to, or ignorant of, the wants of his creatures; and needs, by clamour, to be roused into attention, or knowledge, or sympathy. The Christian supplicant by immoderately lengthening his prayers, converts them into a mere external and laborious service: he exposes himself to fatigue and carelessness; diverts devotion from the affectionate emotion of the heart into the vain work of the invention; or, perhaps, into an instrument, by sanctimonious character, of gratifying a selfish covetousness. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye devour widows' houses; and for a pretence, make *long prayer*." (Matt. xxiii.)

Where a true spirit of devotion is maintained from a deep sense of our necessity and from an ardent desire of divine grace, we cannot well exceed either in the frequency or the continuance of our addresses to God. The lips can never move too long in prayer, so long as the heart moves with them. What a long, yet excellent prayer, did Solomon pronounce at the dedication of the Temple! David makes frequent repetition of the same petition or thanksgiving in the same Psalm. Our Saviour prayed thrice that the cup of suffering might pass from him; and thrice used the same words. As to the length of his devotions, we read (Luke, vi. 12,) that he continued *all night* in prayer. All copiousness in prayer must no more be condemned than all repetitions. Many things must be asked not only for ourselves but for others: so that when the heart is in a spiritual frame, we may pray for a long time together, without formality or unmeaning tautology. The Jewish Rabbins, on the contrary, seemed to rest the efficacy of prayer more upon its length, than upon the devout spirit of the petitioner: "Every one who multiplies prayer, shall be heard;" and, "The prayer that is long, shall not return empty."

It were no difficult task to contract the Liturgies of most Churches into half their present compass, and yet retain every distinct petition, as well as the substance of every sentiment: but brevity may be studied too much. If the devotion of the congregation could be uniformly sustained throughout; a very short service would be sufficient for every purpose of social worship. But seeing the attention of most men is apt to wander and return at intervals, the composer of a liturgy will admit a certain

degree of amplification and repetition, of diversity of expression upon the same subject, and variety of phrase and form with little addition to the sense; to the end that the attention which has been slumbering or absent during one part of the service, may be excited and recalled by another; and the assembly kept together, until it may reasonably be presumed, that the most heedless and inadvertent have performed some act of devotion; and the most desultory attention been taught by some part or other of the public service. On the other hand, the too great length of Church-services is more unfavourable to piety, than almost any fault of composition can be. Many come to church seldom; and when they do come, they enter the doors under the apprehension of a tedious attendance, which they prepare for at first, or soon after relieve, by composing themselves to a drowsy forgetfulness of the place and duty, or by sending abroad their thought in search of more amusing occupation. Although there may be some few of a disposition not to be wearied with religious exercises; yet where a ritual is prolix, and the celebration of divine service long; no effect is, in general, to be looked for, but that indolence will find in it an excuse, and piety be disconcerted by impatience. (PALEY.)

Under culpable tautology may be classed the papistical custom of praying by the counting of beads, strung in chaplets, and forming what is termed a *Rosary*. The *Rosary* consists of a repetition of the Ave Maria (or the Angel's salutation of the Virgin Mary) and the Pater Noster or Lord's Prayer. It is divided into decads of ten Ave Marias; each decad being preceded by the Lord's Prayer, and terminating with the Gloria Patri. The Great *Rosary* consists of fifteen decads; the common *Rosary*, of five: but even in the use of the latter, to repeat the Ave Maria fifty times, the Lord's Prayer five times, the Gloria Patri five times, in one act of devotion, is a seeming neglect of our Saviour's injunction, '*Use not vain repetitions.*'

These vain repetitions would be acknowledged to be absurd even by a Romanist, if he heard them issuing from a heathen mouth. He would pity the Mahomedan, repeating in his prayers, the word *Rabboni*, a hundred or two hundred times a-day, as fast as he could articulate the words after each other. The usual number of repeating certain words is thirty-three times each; and the Mussulman's beads are strung accordingly three times thirty-

three, with a large dividing bead between each division. In this mode of praying, the Mussulman and Romanist are brethren. (BURDER, *Orient. C.* p. 369, ed. 1847.)

II. Our Lord dissuades his disciples from using vain repetitions and much speaking in prayer, by the consideration, that *your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him*. From these words, an objection has been raised against prayer in general : for if an omniscient God knows already what we want, before we ask it ; to what purpose do we ask those things which he already knows we stand in need of ? The answer to this objection is evident. The real design of prayer, is, in the first place, to express, under a lively impression of the presence of God, the sense we have of our dependence upon him, of our manifold wants, and that he alone is able to supply them ; and to make this sense more deep and affecting. Now, since it is a certain truth that we depend upon God ; and have numberless wants, the supplying of which we can expect from God alone ; is it not highly reasonable and natural, that we should acknowledge this in his presence, and express to him our desires, and our dependence upon him ? Do not such acknowledgments frequently made to him, naturally tend to strengthen our sense of this truth, and to make it more deeply affecting ? Will any one venture to assert that this truth is not to be thus owned ? Is not this a truth owned by angels in heaven, as well as men upon earth ? Besides, is not this a truth in which we are deeply interested ? Is it not of the highest importance towards cultivating all other good dispositions, that we have most lively impressions of this truth, and use the most natural means of making them lively ? As our dependence upon God is the primary, the most important of all relations, and the foundation of all others ; the deepest sense and acknowledgment of it must be our first, our supreme, and our most natural and most indispensable duty : our obligation to it can never be extinguished any other way than either by annihilating us, depriving us of our reason, or rendering us independent.

An intimate and habitual sense of our dependent state, has a mighty influence on all the duties which we owe to our Creator and to one another. The strength of our love, the warmth of our gratitude to our Maker, and the stability of our confidence in him, must rise or fall in proportion as the persuasion of our

dependence upon him is fainter or stronger. And as nothing has a more powerful tendency to inspire us with love and compassion to our fellow-creatures, than considering them as the children of the same great Parent of all, equally depending upon him with ourselves, for all they enjoy here, or hope for hereafter ; so, nothing can more effectually check that pride, selfishness, and vanity, which lead us to contemn and injure our brethren of mankind, than an habitual sense, that we are as really dependent creatures as they are ; that we are as insufficient for our own happiness as they are ; and that he on whom we depend, can soon raise them to our state, or thrust us down into theirs : why then, may not this truth, most certain in itself, and most important in its consequences, be owned in the most public and religious manner ; in that manner, which naturally tends to make the deepest impressions of it upon our hearts ; and that, certainly, is the owning it in direct addresses to God himself.

A further design of prayer, is, to express, under an actual sense of the presence of God, our earnest desires of having all those pious dispositions, which it is proper for us to entertain and cultivate, considered as dependent, reasonable, social, and guilty creatures. If we find ardent desires arising within us, after the knowledge, the favour, the resemblance, and enjoyment of God ; why may we not express them in that manner, and in those circumstances, which will contribute most to cultivate and increase such honourable and worthy motions of the rational soul ? and, surely, the addressing such desires to God is the most effectual method of strengthening them. If we believe that God can accomplish these worthy desires ; and hope and trust in him that he will sooner or later accomplish them, why may we not declare our joyful expectations of being at last possessed of them ? If we feel our souls ascending to God in love, joy, and praise, is it not reasonable, that we should indulge those delightful sentiments, and by repeated acts, confirm and improve them ?

If these inward emotions of heart are just and natural, if we cannot but approve them, if we judge them worthy of being cherished and strengthened ; why may we not give full vent to them, in all proper methods of outward expression ? And, if our own experience, and the testimony of the best of mankind inform us, that the yielding up our souls to the full influences of devout affections, and giving them full scope in voice and

language, especially in addresses to God, are the most effectual methods of increasing that strength and fervour, and of spreading their happy effects through the whole of human life; it surely must be our truest wisdom to employ all these means of establishing and perfecting them. (LEECHMAN.)

§ 29. Forms of Prayer. MATTHEW, vi. 9: *AFTER this model pray ye.*

OUR Saviour having pointed out the defects occurring in the prayers of the Pharisees, condescended to instruct his own disciples in a more acceptable mode of addressing the throne of grace. A prayer, dictated and sanctioned by our Lord himself, deserves the most minute and reverend attention: but previously to examining the various petitions, it is not an unseasonable digression to advert to the lawfulness and utility of set prayers.

The Jewish Church, in the days of our Saviour, used several set forms of devotion; which our Saviour was so far from censuring, that he himself not only joined in them, as when he officiated at Nazareth; but he appears to have prescribed, at least to have authorized the use of fixed forms, when he complied with the request of the disciple, "*Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*" (Luke, xi. 1.) The primitive Church always used Liturgies; several of which are preserved. And not only the Romish, but the Greek and Reformed Churches, have their set forms: even the Presbyterians, after inveighing against them, found it necessary to prescribe what they term, "A Directory for the Public Worship of God."

The advantages of a Liturgy are many and great.

In order to our being edified, so as to be made better and holier, whensoever we meet together upon a religious account, it is necessary that the same good and holy things be always inculcated and pressed upon us after one and the same manner. For we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to fasten anything that is truly good either upon ourselves or others: and that it is rarely, if ever, effected, without frequent repetitions of it. Whatsoever good things we hear only

once, or now and then, although perhaps upon the hearing of them, they may swim for a while in our brains, yet they seldom sink down into our hearts, so as to move and sway the affections : as it is necessary they should do, in order to our being edified by them. Whereas, by a set form of public devotions rightly composed, as we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know or do, so that it is always done by the same words and expressions, which by their constant use will imprint the things themselves so firmly in our minds, it will be no easy matter to obliterate or rase them out ; but do what we can, they will still occur upon all occasions ; which cannot but be very much for our Christian edification.

Moreover, that which conduceth to the quickening our souls, and to the raising up our affections in our public devotions, must needs be acknowledged to conduce much to our edification. But it is plain, that, as to such purposes, a set form of prayer is an extraordinary help to us ; for, if I hear another pray, and know not beforehand what he will say, I must first listen to what he will say next : then I am to consider, whether what he saith be agreeable to sound doctrine, and whether it be proper and lawful for me to join with him in the petitions he puts up to God Almighty ; and if I think it is so, then I am to do it. But before I can well do that, he is got to another thing : by which means it is very difficult, if not morally impossible, to join with him in everything so regularly as I ought to do. But by a set form of prayer all this trouble is prevented ; for having the form continually in my mind, being thoroughly acquainted with it, fully approving of everything in it, and always knowing beforehand what will come next, I have nothing else to do, whilst the words are sounding in mine ears, but to move my heart and affections suitable to them, to raise up my desires of those good things which are prayed for, to fix my mind wholly upon God, whilst I am praising of him ; and so to employ, quicken, and lift up my whole soul in performing my devotions to him. No man that hath been accustomed to a set form for any considerable time, but may easily find this to be true by his own experience : and by consequence, that this way of praying is a greater help to us, than they can imagine that never made trial of it.

To this may be also added, that if we hear another pray in a

prayer of his own private composition or voluntary effusion, our minds are wholly bound up and confined to his words and expressions, and to his requests and petitions, be they what they will : so that at the best we can but pray his prayer. Whereas when we pray by a form prescribed by the Church, we pray the prayers of the whole Church we live in, which are common to the minister and people, to ourselves, and to all the members of the same Church : so that we have all the devout and pious souls that are in it, concerning and joining with us in them : which cannot surely but be more effectual for the edifying not only of ourselves in particular, but of the Church in general, than any private prayer can be.

Lastly, in order to our being edified by our public devotions, as it is necessary that we know beforehand what we are to pray for, so it is necessary that we afterwards know what we have prayed for, when we have done : for I suppose you will all grant, that all the good and benefit we can receive from our prayers, is to be ultimately resolved into God's gracious hearing, and answering of them : without which they will all come to nothing. But there are two things required to the obtaining an answer of our prayers : first, that we sincerely and earnestly desire good things at the hands of God, to which, as I have shewn, a set form of prayer conduceth very much : and then, secondly, it is required also, that we trust and depend upon God for his granting of them, according to the promises which he hath made unto us in Jesus Christ our Lord. And I verily believe, that one great reason why men pray so often to no purpose is, because they do not take this course ; but when they have done their prayers, they have done with them, and concern themselves no more about them, than as if they had never prayed at all. But how can we expect that God should answer our prayers, when we ourselves do not mind whether he answers them or no ? nor believe and trust upon him for it ? for certainly trusting in God, as it is one of the highest acts of religion that we can perform, so it is that which gives life and vigour, virtue and efficacy to our prayers, without which we have no ground at all to expect they should be answered : for God having promised to answer our prayers, except we trust on him for his performance of such promises, we lose the benefit of them, and by consequence our prayers too. And therefore, as ever we desire

that he should grant us what we pray for, when we have "directed our prayers to him, we must still look up," expecting and hoping for the return of them.

Now as this is a thing of a greater consequence, so a set form of prayer is a greater help to us in it, than it is commonly thought to be. For if we hear another utter a prayer *ex tempore*, which he never said, nor we heard before, nor ever shall do again, it is much if he himself can remember the tenth part of what he said: how much less can we that heard him, do it. And if we cannot possibly remember what he prayed for, how is it possible for us to expect it at the hands of God? or to depend upon him for it? But now it is quite otherwise when we use a set form of prayer: for by this means, when we have prayed, we can recollect ourselves, look over our prayers again, either in a book, or in our minds, where they are imprinted; we can consider distinctly what we have asked at the hands of God, and so set our faith and confidence on him for the granting every petition we have put up unto him, according to the promises which he hath made us to that purpose. And as this is the surest way whereby to obtain what we pray for, it must needs be the most edifying way of praying that we can possibly use. (BISHOP BEVERIDGE.)

§ 30. Liturgy of the English Church. MATTHEW, vi. 9:
AFTER this manner pray ye.

IN referring to the utility of set forms of prayer, let us thank God by whose good providence we are members of a Church whose public offices are so modelled and contrived, as to be apt, in every part of them, to raise the attention and kindle a holy flame in the breast of all sincere worshippers.

1. The language wherein our service is performed, cannot but be of use to fix and keep alive our attention. It is our own mother-tongue; what all of us are acquainted with; and can therefore listen to with delight, because we understand it. There is a Church whose public prayers are put up in a language unknown to the greatest part of those who are to join in them: but how can the heart be affected by the mere sound of words, while it is utterly a stranger to their meaning? The

public devotion therefore of an unlettered papist, must needs be one continued scene of distractions and wanderings, from the beginning to the end.

Nor are our Offices drawn up only in our own tongue, but in the most easy and plain parts of it, which lie open to Christians of the meanest capacities and attainments. There is nothing fantastical in the expression of them; no vain use of such hard phrases of scripture, as tend rather to amuse and puzzle, than to instruct common hearers; nothing which approaches to that mysterious, unintelligible way of speaking, in which some either deceiving or deceived Christians delight: nothing that savours of singularity, hypocrisy, or enthusiasm. Whatever we meet with, is plain, simple, natural, and yet at the same time solemn, majestic, moving; significant and full, sound and wholesome. It carries both light and heat in it; and is fitted equally to inform the understandings, and inflame the affections, of the wisest and weakest of Christians.

2. These prayers and praises are offered up in a premeditated form of words, with which every one is before acquainted. Unpremeditated prayers, uttered with great fluency, with a devout warmth and earnestness, are apt to make strong and awakening impressions on the minds of the generality of hearers. But it may be doubted, whether the attention thus raised, be not an attention rather of curiosity and surprise, than of real piety and sound devotion.—For a good and conscientious man, who is to join in a prayer with which he was before unacquainted, must needs do it with some little diffidence and fear, lest there should be anything, in the matter or manner of that prayer, improper and unbecoming. He must suspend his assent to those unknown requests, till he has so far considered them, as to be sure that they are fit for him to agree in: and while he is thus employing his thoughts on one petition or sentence, another succeeds, which will require a like degree of suspense and deliberation; and this cannot but check his devotion, by dividing and breaking the force of his mind. Whereas he who offers up his requests to God in a known and stated form, has no avocations of this kind to struggle with, and can therefore apply himself directly and vigorously to his holy task, and *ask in faith, nothing doubting*. (James, i. 6.) He fears not lest unfitting requests should be made, or fit ones

clothed in unsuitable language ; and is therefore at leisure to excite all the powers and affections of his soul, and to engage them in that spiritual service. This is a peculiar advantage which attends the use of pre-composed prayers ; and if there be many who do not find and feel this effect of them, it is not the fault of set forms, but their own. They want attention and fervency in this way of worship ; and they would want it equally, perhaps much more, in any other.

3. Our service is one continued act of devotion, but is interrupted by many little breaks and pauses, and consists of several distinct and entire forms of petition and praise. By these means the mind is eased and relieved from too long and strict an attention ; retires a little, and returns, as it were, with new strength to its duty. The Collects of our Liturgy are so short, that a devout Christian may, even whilst he is pronouncing his *Amen* at the close, by a sudden glance of thought, recollect every branch of them, and so contract into that single word the whole force of the preceding prayer. The very frame and contrivance of these Collects is highly useful to raise and to enliven our devotions, inasmuch as they generally begin with the awful mention of some of God's attributes, and always end with reminding us of the blood and intercession of Jesus ; and what considerations in religion are there more operative and more awakening than these, which return so often upon our minds during the course of our excellent service ?

4. Our Liturgy abounds in a useful and affecting variety of all sorts of religious duty, in which a creature can apply itself to its Creator. There we confess our sins, and intercede with God for the pardon of them. There we deprecate the divine judgments that may be inflicted, and pray for all the blessings (spiritual and temporal) that can be bestowed on ourselves or others ; and there we put up our praises and thanksgivings to God for all the instances of his mercy and goodness towards us. There we hear the Holy Scriptures read, and profess our belief of the great articles of faith ; and these different parts of divine worship are so happily intermixed, and succeed each other in so beautiful an order, that the mind of the worshipper has always a new and pleasing employment.

As the priest has his share in the performance of these offices, so the people too have theirs, and in a much larger pro-

portion than belongs to them in any other Christian assemblies. Each is employed in stirring up the other into an holy and affectionate emulation of heart and voice, and they do therefore mutually provoke and kindle each other's devotion.

5. The service of our sanctuary is particularly contrived to promote attention, by the decent, orderly, and solemn manner in which it is performed; for it is neither on the one side so very plain and simple as not to be able to rouse, nor on the other so splendid and gaudy as to be apt to distract, the mind. It is duly tempered between these extremes, and partakes of either, as far as either is requisite towards creating and cherishing a sound and reasonable, a warm and active devotion. Pictures indeed, and images, to which the Church of Rome in this case has recourse, fix the attention, but it is on a wrong object. A multitude of vain and pompous ceremonies, a variety of rich habits and ornaments, music framed for delight without improvement; these things indeed may render an assembly attent, but so likewise would a scene in the theatre. The devotion they produce (if indeed they produce any) goes no farther than the senses; it is not that of the heart and spirit. But with us, all the outside of our worship contributes towards the inward life and reality of it. Our churches are decently adorned; they who officiate at our altars, are decently habited; our daily service is performed, and our sacraments administered, in a becoming and reverend manner; our music is always, or always ought to be, grave and solemn. Every part and circumstance of our worship is so ordered as to inspire us with an holy reverence and awe, and so far to keep the outward senses awake, as their vigilance may be of use to give wings to our devotion, and vigour to our minds.

Since therefore we have so many signal helps and advantages towards worshipping God in his sanctuary with an heavenly frame and temper of soul, let us resolve to make a due use of them; to repair often to the house of God with holy reverence and awe; and *to lift up our hearts, together with our hands*, whenever we thus approach him, *in the beauty of holiness*. (ATTEBURY.)

The length and repetitions, complained of in our Liturgy, are not so much the fault of the Compilers, as the effect of *uniting into one service what was originally distributed into three*.

* * * Few would be displeased with such omissions, abridgements, or change in the arrangement, as the combination of separate services must necessarily require; even supposing each to have been faultless in itself. * * * The Church would [then] be in possession of a Liturgy, in which those who assent to her doctrines, would have little to blame; and the most dissatisfied must acknowledge many beauties. The style throughout is excellent; calm, without coldness; and though everywhere sedate, oftentimes affecting. The pauses in the service are disposed at proper intervals. The transitions from one office of devotion to another, from confession to prayer, from prayer to thanksgiving, from thanksgiving to hearing of the word, supply the mind with a succession of diversified engagements. As much variety also is introduced in the form of praying, as this kind of composition seems capable of admitting. The prayer at one time, is continued; at another, broken by responses, or cast into short alternate ejaculations; and sometimes the congregation is called upon to take its share in the service, by being left to complete a sentence which the minister had begun. The enumeration of human wants and sufferings in the Litany, is almost complete. A Christian petitioner can have few things to ask of God or to deprecate, which he will not find there expressed; and for the most part, with inimitable tenderness and simplicity. (PALEY.)

§ 31. OUR Heavenly Father. MATTHEW, vi. 9: OUR *Father who art in heaven.*

THE Lord's Prayer, in itself, is very clear, very expressive, very comprehensive. But how excellent words soever we use, if we add no meaning to them, this can be no praying. And, therefore, to make it really beneficial to us, we must fix deeply in our thoughts, what it was intended by its author to contain.

It consists of three parts. I. An invocation, or calling upon God. II. Petitions offered. III. Praises ascribed to him.

The invocation is in these words, *Our Father, which art in Heaven.*

As the whole world *derives its being from God*, he is on that account styled, 'the Father of all.' But as rational creatures are

produced, not only by him, but in his image and likeness, he is in a stricter sense the Father of these. In which sense the Prophet saith, "O Lord, thou art our Father, and we are all the work of thy hand." (Isa. lxiv. 8.)

A second title God hath to this name, from that *fatherly providence* and goodness which he exercises everywhere continually; dealing with us as with children whom he loveth.

But there is yet a third reason, why we call him *our Father*, peculiar to us as Christians; and founded on our being united by faith to his Son our Head, and "begotten again, through his Gospel, to a lively hope, to an inheritance reserved in Heaven for us" (1 Cor. iv. 15): privileges so invaluable, that though he is doubtless a father, and a tender one, to our whole species, yet his word speaks of us, as the only persons, in comparison, that have a right to consider him in this view. 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.' (John, i. 12.) The Lord is good to all: but singularly good to those, who become, by the influences of the Christian Covenant, singularly fit objects of his goodness. They have promises of the greatest blessings, to which nothing, but promise, can entitle: pardon of sin, assistance of the Holy Spirit, and life eternal; by which last they are made, in the happiest sense, the Children of God, being the Children of the Resurrection. (Luke, xx. 36.) Let us learn then, as often as we say, *Our Father*, to magnify in our souls, that gracious Redeemer, who hath made him so to us, more than he is to others. Let us often repeat the thankful reflection of St. John, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the Sons of God' (1 John, iii. 1); and joyfully argue, as St. Paul doth, 'If Children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.' (Rom. vii. 17.)

Thus then the words, *Our Father*, express not only the absolute *authority*, but the unspeakable *goodness* of God; and the next, *which art in Heaven*, acknowledge his *glory* and *power*.

As God cannot but be, so he cannot but be everywhere: for there is nothing in any one part of space to confine his presence to that, rather than to any other. But still the Scriptures represent him as manifesting the more visible tokens of his inexpressible majesty in one peculiar place: where he receives the

homage of his holy angels, and issues forth his command for the government of the world. This they call his *Throne and Tabernacle in Heaven*: of which the earthly tabernacle of Moses was designed to be a figure; being directed to be "made according to the pattern shewed him in the Mount." (Heb. viii. 5.) That earthly tabernacle was honoured for a long time with splendid marks of the Divine residence: on which account, even after they were withdrawn, the Jews would be apt to consider God as dwelling at Jerusalem in his Temple, "and sitting between the Cherubim." (Ps. xcix. 1.) But our blessed Lord being about to abolish the Mosaic ordinances, enlarges the views of his disciples, and raises them to that higher habitation of inconceivable glory, to which they should hereafter be admitted; and on which they were in the meanwhile to set their hearts, as the seat of all blessedness.

But further, being *in Heaven* denotes likewise the almighty power of God: agreeably to that of the Psalmist, "Our God is in the Heaven: he hath done whatsoever he pleased." For as a higher situation gives a superior strength and command; and accordingly in all languages, being exalted or brought low, signifies an increase or lessening of dominion or influence; so representing God, as placed above all, is designed to express, in the strongest manner, that "*His Kingdom ruleth over all.*" (Ps. ciii. 19.)

When therefore we call upon *our Father which is in Heaven*, we profess to God our belief, that he is the author and preserver of the universe, who governs all things with paternal care; but extends his favours especially to those, who by imitating and obeying him shew themselves his true children; and therefore most especially to such, as having acquired, by the merits and grace of his Son, the nearest relation and resemblance to him, have thereby a covenant right to an eternal inheritance in that blessed place, where he exhibits his glory, and reigns, possessed of sovereign authority, and boundless glory.

Now applying thus to God, under the notion of *our Father*, is excellently fitted to remind us, both of the dutiful regard, which we ought to have for him, as he himself pleads, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" (Mal. i. 6) and also, of the kindness, which we may expect from him, according to our Saviour's reasoning, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good

gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke, xi. 13.) Nor is this expression less fitted to admonish us of copying the goodness, which we adore; "that we may be the children of our Father, which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 45.) And this admonition is greatly strengthened, as each of us is directed to address himself to God, not as to his own Father merely, but as to *our* Father, the common parent of mankind. For there is inexpressible force in that argument, "Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously," or in any respect unjustly or unkindly, "every man against his brother?" (Matt. ii. 10.) And yet with greater force still doth it hold, to prevent mutual injuries or unkindness among Christians: who being in a much closer and more endearing sense, Children of God, and brethren one to another, than the rest of the world; surely ought never to be deficient in that reciprocal affection, which was intended as the token, whereby all men should see them.

The consideration, that this *our Father is in Heaven*, possessed of infinite power and glory, tends greatly to inspire us with reverence towards him, at all times, and in all places, but in our devotions peculiarly. And to this end it is pleaded by the wise King, "Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God; be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth." (Eccl. v. 1.) It also tends no less to remind us, what the great end of our prayers and our lives should be: to obtain admittance into that blessed place, where God is, and Christ sits on his right hand. "For in his presence is the fulness of joy; and at his right hand, there is pleasure for evermore." (SECKER.)

§ 32. Reverence due to the name of God. MATTHEW, vi. 9:
HALLOWED be thy name.

IN this petition, *the name of God* is put for *God himself*. His name is *hallowed* or *sanctified*, by entertaining just notions

of his nature : for unless we have a right sense of his wisdom, justice and goodness, our worship of him will be infected with heathen impurity ; and consequently our conduct will disgrace a pure and holy Gospel. The duty of thus hallowing the name of God is so important, that our Saviour has made it our first petition : and God himself has repeatedly enforced the obligation by forbidding what is opposite to hallowing his name,—an irreverent profanation of it. Thou shalt not profane the name of the Lord thy God (Levit. xix. 12) : and God subjoins a reason of the dissuasive : *I am the Lord*. To consider the sin of profaning the name of God is to illustrate the duty of hallowing and sanctifying it.

The highest and most presumptuous degree of profaning the name of God, is *perjury* ; when a man solemnly calls God to witness the truth of that which he either knows to be false, or does not know to be true. This is a crime of so high a nature, that no man can possibly be guilty of it, who has any sense at all of religion remaining upon his mind. For he who knowingly and deliberately calls God to witness to a falsehood in order to deceive or wrong his neighbour, does openly disclaim the mercies of God, and challenges the Almighty to shew him no favour.

2dly. The next degree of profaning the name of God, is that indecent as well as wicked custom of *rash swearing in common conversation*. Of which sin, the first aggravation is, that they who are guilty of it, are in perpetual danger of the crime of perjury. For he who uses himself to swear frequently and habitually, will never attend carefully, that what he swears to, be true. Nay, it is too just an observation, that they who are accustomed to this vice at all, are then apt to be most guilty of it, when they are most provoked, and most suspicious that what they affirm, is not credible. This argument is well urged by the Son of Sirach (Ecclus. xxiii. 9) : “ Accustom not thy mouth to swearing, neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One. For as a servant that is continually beaten, shall not be without a blue mark ; so he that sweareth, and nameth God continually, shall not be faultless. A man that useth much swearing, shall be filled with iniquity ; and the plague shall never depart from his house. If he shall offend,” (that is, *fall into perjury*,) “ his sin shall be upon him ; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he

maketh a double offence; and if he swear in vain," (that is, *falsely*.) "he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities." But if the danger of perjury could certainly be avoided (as it never can be by habitual swearers); yet to call upon God perpetually, as a witness to mean and trivial matters, is manifest want of reverence, and want of a just sense of God and religion. And this fault is the more inexcusable, because there cannot here be pretended, as in most other vices, any natural temptation. Drunkenness and debauchery, intemperance and sensuality of all kinds, have their proper allurements; which, though no just excuse indeed, yet afford sinners a deceitful plea for themselves, to allege that they were overpowered by the force and prevalency of temptation; as St. Paul at large argues in the eighth chapter to the Romans. But to the sin we are now speaking of, there is no temptation in nature; unless it may be called a temptation, when a man is ashamed to be thought by abandoned persons one that fears God, or is led to think it a part of courage to despise religion. Whereas indeed it is not courage, to dare to affront the Almighty; but on the contrary a real instance of cowardice, not to dare to perform our duty towards him. It is as if a soldier should imagine that courage consisted, not in opposing the enemy, but in daring to disobey the orders of his proper commander.

Neither is that any just excuse, wherewith many deceive themselves, when they swear by any other thing, and not by their Maker. For this very precaution shews, that they could as easily, if they were careful, avoid the sin wholly, as attend to a particular circumstance in the manner of committing it. Which circumstance, nevertheless, does not at all hinder it from amounting in reality to the very same thing. For as, in common speech, that usual prayer, Heaven bless or reward a man, is evidently of the very same import, as if therein had been more expressly mentioned, God who dwelleth in heaven; so swearing by any creature, does in truth amount to the same thing as swearing by the name of God, whose creature it is; and who alone indeed can finally be supposed to be appealed to, for the truth of the thing affirmed, and for the sincerity of the intention. "Whoso (saith our Saviour) shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that

dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." (Matt. xxiii. 20.) The inference he draws from this reasoning, is, therefore, "Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King: neither by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil." (Matt. v. 34.) And St. James, chap. v. 12: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be Yea, and your nay Nay, lest ye fall into condemnation." Simplicity and plainness of speech, greatly becomes the sincerity of Christians; whose profession teaches them to be so far removed from all fraud and deceit, in imitation of their Master, in whose mouth was found no guile; that, did they in any measure live worthy of their holy profession, there never would be any ground of suspicion, never any occasion, never any temptation in matters of common conversation and ordinary concern, to make use of any such asseverations as our Saviour declares to come *from evil; or from the evil one.*

Further: as rash swearing, so all cursing also, is a part of that profanation of the name of God, which is forbidden. For when men, in common conversation, use curses and imprecations against their brethren; as passionate and profane men are frequently apt to do; it is either with an intention and desire that mischief may befall them; which is both malicious towards men, and also irreligiously thinking light of the curse of God: or else it is without any such desire or intention; and then it is profanely supposing God to have no regard to their behaviour.

Another vice, included in profaning the name of God, is *scoffing, blaspheming, or speaking reproachfully of religion.* This is what the Psalmist reckons in the highest degree of sins, where he distinguishes offenders into three several ranks (Ps. i. 1); the man that 'walketh in the counsel of the ungodly;' the man that 'standeth in the way of sinners;' and the man that 'sitteth in the seat of the scornful:' *of the scornful*, that is, of those who not only neglect, but also scoff at religion; and

make a mock at that, which of all things in the world is of the greatest importance. If there were but little evidence for the truth of religion, yet even in that case a reasonable man, seeing that religion is absolutely necessary to the well-being of rational and intelligent creatures, would earnestly wish its proofs to be more convincing. But for men who *do* make profession of religion, yet at the same time wantonly and profanely scoff at the most serious and important parts of the religion they profess; this is of all others, the most absurd and stupid piece of wickedness; such as no persons can be guilty of, but those whom St. Paul describes as having their "consciences seared with a hot iron." (1 Tim. iv.)

Some brief admonitions may be suggested, in order to prevent the growth or continuance of this sin.

1. He who would avoid the habit or custom, must beware of the first step or tendency to it. It is a maxim in spiritual as well as bodily disorders, to check the first appearance of a disease, lest it should grow inveterate, and at length incurable. And therefore we should do well to avoid all vehemence of assertion, all violence of passion, as dangerous approaches to this sin. St. Peter, charged with being one of the disciples of Jesus, at first replied with a bare denial; accused a second time, he grew somewhat warmer, and expressed himself with greater vehemence; but when charged the third time, urged his denial with oaths and imprecations.

2. We may hence observe the danger of yielding to the first impulses of passion, since even an apostle, in a short space of time, was led on from a bare denial to bitter and violent imprecations. When the mind is hurried on by the impetuosity of violent passion, oaths are often found the readiest way to discharge the heat of resentment; and the mind, not under the conduct of reason, vents a sinful passion by a more sinful execration.

Lastly. Let us possess our minds with the most respectful and awful sentiments of the greatness, and goodness, and majesty of the Supreme Being. This is the most rational and effectual means to prevent us from prostituting and profaning his sacred name. Is he the Lord and Ruler of the universe, who has heaven for his throne, and earth for his footstool; whose power is irresistible; whose kingdom is infinite and

eternal ; whose sovereignty gives him a right to our obedience : and whose goodness and mercy to us demand an infinitely higher tribute of grateful respect than we can pay ? Let us not dare to offer such an insult and indignity, as to call him to witness every unimportant matter we may happen to be engaged in. Let us ever preserve an awful and reverential regard for the majesty of heaven ; let us not speak or think of God but with veneration ; let the words of our mouth, as well as the meditations of our heart be ever acceptable in his sight ; let us ever consult his honour, and *hallowed be his name.* (DR. S. CLARKE. CARR.)

§ 38. Nature of God's Kingdom. MATTHEW, vi. 10. Luke, xi. 2. *THY kingdom come.*

THESE words follow the preceding petition in natural connexion : since the *hallowing* or *sanctifying* the name of God is an effectual means of rendering us good subjects of that kingdom, for whose coming we pray.

Revelation speaks of *three* kingdoms of God, 1. *The kingdom of nature*, by which the Creator of the world still upholds it. The knowledge of this kingdom was unknown to many of the heathen philosophers ; who denied either that a God existed, or that he was interested in the conduct of men.

Secondly : the Scriptures mention a kingdom of *grace*. This is the manifestation of the Messiah in the flesh promised to the Church as her King, in the most illustrious train of prophecies.

Thirdly : there is the kingdom of *glory*. This empire is exercised by God over all glorified spirits. The economy of the Mediator having ceased with the wants of the Redeemed ; the work of salvation having been accomplished ; Jesus Christ having raised our mortal bodies to be like unto his own glorious body ; crime having received its punishment, and Christian virtue a reward ; “ then cometh the end when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father ; and shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”

Of these three kingdoms, we are more immediately concerned in the kingdom of God's grace, while we remain on earth, in a state of moral probation. It is, therefore, Christian

prudence to inquire what are the chief marks of this kingdom, in order to ascertain what duties are demanded from those who, through Christ, aspire to be enrolled among the citizens of the new Jerusalem.

1. The first of these marks may be instanced in the *extent* of Christ's kingdom.—“I will give the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession :” (Ps. ii.) “Thou mayest be my salvation, to the ends of the earth :” (Isa. xlix.) “There was given him a kingdom, that all nations and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away.” (Daniel, vii.) The four great monarchies, symbolically described in the vision of the prophet, were appointed to vanish, in succession, before the more glorious and durable kingdom of the Messiah. If this universality of empire be not yet established to the letter ; let us remember that the Gospel, like other divine dispensations, is progressive in its nature ; and that God does not compel us to come in, but rather draws his rational creatures by the cords of love and actual conviction. And may not the supposed tardiness of the Gospel be a punishment for our indifference to the glorious privilege of co-operating with God ? While nations are more desirous to erect the standard of conquest than the cross of Christ ; while they are careless to sanctify their commercial gains by bearing with them the holiest freight, the Gospel of Christ ; the spread of divine knowledge is grievously retarded. Yet amidst many discouragements, the grain of mustard-seed is expanding. The worship of Christ prevails not only in the cities of Europe, but the Eastern hemisphere, and even the idolatrous coasts of Africa have resounded to the name of Jesus. These first-fruits of the past lead exulting Abrahams to discern, though far off, the day of Christ, when the worship of him shall be diffused, even as waters cover the earth.

2. A second mark of God's kingdom is its *pacific* nature. The Messiah was entitled “The Prince of *peace*.” While earthly kings extend their empire by the sword, Christ “speaks *peace* unto his people.” His symbol is not the lion, nor whatever denotes ferocity ; but the lamb, dumb before its shearers. Fain would Christ convert swords into pruning-hooks. He wills not that brethren, journeying in one common pilgrimage, should fall out by the way.

3. A third mark of God's kingdom upon earth, is *holiness*. God "raised up unto David a *righteous* branch." He "set his king upon his *holy* hill of Sion." Righteousness left the earth at the fall of the first Adam: it returned to bless the earth, at the birth of the second Adam. We see our Redeemer moving among mankind, with a pure light uncontaminated by all the fogs of earth. He fulfilled the righteousness of the Law, by submitting to its obligations. He baffled the temptations of the evil one; who was seen to fall, like lightning, from heaven. Christ, being the Lamb of God without spot, offered, on the Cross, an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He founded a holy church; and adorned it with holy sacraments. By our faith in his meritorious oblation, a faith which worketh by love, he becomes "the Lord our *Righteousness*." "A sceptre of *righteousness* is the sceptre of his kingdom."

4. A fourth mark of God's kingdom on earth is its *spirituality*. It is opposed to what is carnal and worldly. Our Saviour himself declares, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" Christ came not with the trappings of regal pomp; nor as a victorious monarch over the Roman legions. "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" Human rulers can affect the body: but Christ alone has power over the soul. He transfers us from the sovereignty of Satan into the kingdom of his heavenly Father. Earthly kings may dispense titles, riches, and perhaps, political tranquillity; but peace of conscience, the aids of the Holy Spirit, reconciliation with God, contentment of mind; these blessings are dispensed by Christ alone who purchased them.

In reviewing these marks of God's kingdom, as established by his Blessed Son, we trace our own corresponding duties.

1. In reference to the *extent* of Christ's kingdom, we pray that God would have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics; take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of the divine word. We pray that all sovereigns who wear a Christian diadem, should in all their thoughts, words, and actions, consult the honour and glory of that greater king by whom they reign. We pray that a double portion of God's Spirit may descend upon his ordained servants, engaged in diffusing true religion either around our domestic altars, or as missionaries in foreign realms. We implore the blessing of God upon all preceptors; that our children may be trained in

the right path, and from it never depart. We pray that the voice of ancient prophets may not have been uttered in vain : for how little prospect soever there may be at present of such happiness as this, yet we have a sure word of prophecy, for the ground of our prayers, that the time shall come when the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, in a degree that they have never been yet; when all the people shall be righteous, and know the Lord from the greatest unto the least. (Isa. lx. 21 ; Jer. xxxi. 34 ; Rev. xi. 15.)

2. In reference to the *pacific* sceptre of Jesus, we pray that He at whose birth peace was proclaimed, may cause the nations not to learn war any more. We pray that the Saviour, meek and lowly in heart, but mighty in command, would walk upon the waves of our stormy and turbulent passions, and exclaim, "*Peace, be still :*" so that all wrath, malice, and revenge ; all prejudice and uncharitableness ; all bitterness, strife, and contention, may be banished from the breasts of those who profess to be true and loyal subjects of *the Prince of peace*.

3. In reference to the *righteous* sceptre of our king, we pray for grace, that by coming out from the pomps and vanities of a world which is at enmity with him, we may be holy even as he is holy. We pray that in our respective stations, we may exhibit a Christian example in all our domestic relations of husband and wife, master and servant, parent and child ; earnestly striving to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and thereby glorify our Father which is in heaven. The largest part of Christians have corrupted the doctrines of Christ with grievous errors ; and those who preserve the purest faith, too generally live such impure and wicked lives ; that though the kingdom of God hath indeed taken place amongst them in outward appearance, yet in that sense, which will prove at last the only important one, they are still far from it. For the kingdom of God consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the graces of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. xiv. 17.) So that there is the greatest need for praying that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may not only be led into the way of truth, but hold the faith in unity of spirit and in righteousness of life.

4. Is the kingdom of our Master a *spiritual* kingdom ? Let us beware lest we transfer our allegiance to the idols of this

world, whether honour, wealth, ambition, or by whatever name they are designated. Having come out from a ceremonial law, we are summoned to serve God in *spirit* and in truth. Our Temples must raise our thoughts to the throne of God in the highest heaven. Let us approach not with lip-service, not with *confidence* in the observance of rituals ; but with a filial reverence, and with a love which enkindles a glow in all our faculties of heart and mind and soul.

But the kingdom of God upon earth, even in its best estate, is comparatively but short-lived and imperfect, indeed a mere introduction to that glorious and eternal manifestation of it in heaven, which ought ever to be the object of our most ardent desires and requests. For as the Governor, and the governed, and the great fundamental laws of government, are still to be the same, in the present state of trial, and the future one of recompence, they both make up together but one kingdom of God. And therefore, when we pray for the coming of it, we pray, in the last place, for *the arrival of that time*, when the King and Judge of all "shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and reward every man according to his works;" when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father;" even that "kingdom, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world," and "shall reign with him in it for ever." (Matt. xvi. 27 ; xiii. 43 ; xxv. 34.) (SECKER. HUET.)

§ 34. Obedience to the Will of God. MATTHEW, vi. 10 :
THY will be done on earth.

To understand this petition, it will be useful to consider the will of God, as it is commonly distinguished into the will of his *providence*, and the will of his *laws*.

Now with regard to this will of his providence, we are in this petition taught to pray, that God would dispose our souls to be entirely resigned to his appointments : that whenever, by any unexpected direction of the works of nature, he shall frustrate the labour of our hands, and defeat our schemes of success and happiness, we may submit with meekness to his holy pleasure ; or whenever divine justice shall inflict any national calamity on

the sins of the people, or whatever private or personal affliction shall at any time befall us, we may be able to calm our passions and compose the reluctances of nature, and submit our own will to the divine, with the resignation of old Eli : "*It is the Lord ; let him do whatsoever seems good unto him.*"

In this request, we particularly pray for those graces and virtues which have a more especial tendency to dispose us to this resignation to Providence ; such as,

1st, Humility, which corrects every arrogant thought, and mortifies all our presumptuous claims of favour from heaven ; reminds us of our own demerits, and convinces us, that the least blessings we receive are greater than the best of us deserve.

2dly, Content, or an easy unaspiring temper, which rests satisfied with its present share of the bounties of Providence ; neither envies the more liberal allotments of other men, nor repines at its own.

3dly, Patience, and a cheerful submission to whatever pains and afflictions we are at any time called to suffer. And,

Lastly, A quiet subjection to the authority, a full trust in the goodness, the wisdom, and the promises of God : these are virtues of so close an affinity and connexion, that one of them can hardly subsist without the other, and are all of them necessary to form and perfect that resignation to Providence, that entire subjection of our own will to the will of God, which we are here taught to pray for.

Again : this petition comprehends the will of God's laws, whether natural or revealed, and more especially that most perfect declaration of his will vouchsafed to mankind in the gospel of Jesus Christ. With regard to this will, we here pray, that God would enable us to walk according to the rule set before us, and be perfect in every good word and work : that he would strengthen all our infirmities, mortify our lusts, subdue our spiritual enemies, and supply us with such a measure of his grace as may deliver us from the bondage of our own corruption, and make us equal to the difficulties of obedience.

As we are bound not only to obey the divine law ourselves, but also to recommend, as far as we are able, the same observances to others, so we are here taught to pray, that this submission to the will, and obedience to the laws, of God, may

universally prevail through the whole earth ; that the sacred influences of his grace may descend on the hearts and regulate the practice of all mankind.

The *reasonableness* and necessity of this petition may be easily evinced.

No temper or disposition of mind can more properly become a rational creature, than that resignation to the wisdom and providence of God we are here taught to express and desire. Can it consist with the humility of a creature to expostulate on the counsels of the Almighty, and give rules to the Governor of the world ? Shall man especially, shall animated dust and ashes, the lowest of all intelligent beings, who depends on the favour of God for every moment's subsistence, for every pulse of life, shall he take upon him to argue with his Maker, and prescribe to him how he shall order the works of his own hands ?

God has most expressly asserted his right to do whatsoever he pleases in heaven and in earth, and assured us that it is he who presides over nature : that in all her works she moves by his direction and obeys his commands : that it is he who weighs kingdoms in the balance, and disposes the affairs of nations : that the wills and passions of men, and even the hearts of the greatest princes are in his hand, and that he turns them as the rivers of water : that every event of human life comes to pass by his special appointment : that affliction does not spring from the ground, nor trouble from the dust, but that it is he who visits the offences of men with rods, and their sins with scourges. And as this supremacy of God is a just foundation for the worship of his creatures, so it is equally an argument for their submission to his will in the government of the world.

But this disposition will appear especially reasonable, if we reflect that God is a Being of infinite wisdom, sees the most remote trains and consequences of things of which we are ignorant ; that we may be foolishly requesting our own ruin ; and that he may most effectually consult our happiness by denying our most passionate desires. The Holy Scriptures clearly teach us, that his most severe dispensations are conducted by unerring justice, and that we may always securely depend on him that his anger will never be over-proportioned to the demerit of our sins ; that if at any time he suffers affliction to fall in a more distinguished measure on men of virtue and piety, it is intended

as the means to convey some spiritual favour to them of infinitely greater value ; that, lastly, his goodness and benevolence to his creatures appear in every work of nature and providence ; that man especially has been distinguished by the most eminent marks of his favour by a most affectionate provision for his support in this life, and directed by the most amazing instances of love to the attainment of a better. And therefore, if we seriously reflect on our own weakness, ignorance, and passion ; how unfit we are to lay the schemes of Providence, and adjust the various interests of the world, and even to judge what is most for our own happiness, what more prudent and reasonable request can we make for our ourselves, than that a Being equal to the mighty province, a Being infinitely wise, just, and good, and disposed to do better for us than we are able either to ask or think, that this God would execute his own will, and dispose of us and our concerns as should seem good in his eyes.

Secondly, It is highly reasonable that we should pray to God that the will of his laws should in the most perfect manner, be obeyed by his creatures.

This is evident, because it is the most rational desire of a creature that the glory of his Creator, and his own and his neighbour's happiness, should in the most effectual manner be promoted. Now the glory of God is in no way made so visible and conspicuous, as by the ready and universal obedience of his subjects. He then appears in the majesty of his kingdom, when his authority is acknowledged, and his commands revered and obeyed throughout his dominions. Had the laws of God, indeed, been mere arbitrary impositions, the wanton exercise of unlimited power ; had they enjoined us a painful servitude, without any prospect of a reward to encourage our observance, though even upon these terms the sovereignty of the Author had required us to submit to them, yet the duty would have been but heavily complied with, and men would have been difficultly induced to profess such a complacency in the command, as is implied in this petition. But when we observe that the intention of the divine laws is to lead and conduct us to happiness, to promote the public and private interests of the world, to preserve the ease and tranquillity of our abode here, and direct us to eternal felicity hereafter ; with how grateful a devotion should we address our Heavenly Father, that his will may be done on earth.

Let us, in the next place, consider the great *advantage* of living in obedience to the will of God. By studying to comply willingly with all God's appointments, we may hope to gain his favour and protection; the protection of the all-wise and Almighty disposer of all events: which is the only sufficient security against the evils incident to us, and the only solid foundation of satisfaction to the mind. If from an unfeigned reverence of the divine majesty, as supreme Governor of the world, we sincerely endeavour to do his will, we may on good grounds hope that he will at last distinguish us from all the presumptuous violators of his laws; and notwithstanding our numerous imperfections, bestow upon us some marks of his grace and favour. The gospel of his Blessed Son, which reveals to us a future state, hath given us the highest assurance, that if we imitate the example of obedience which he hath set before us, and "do the will of our Father in heaven," we shall obtain like him a resurrection from the dead, and be raised to a state of immortality and glory. This sublime prospect is sufficient to reconcile our minds to the greatest difficulties, in submission to the will of God.

In every well-governed state on earth, the public happiness results from obedience to those laws which are framed for the preservation and good of the whole: much more, in the universal government of the wisest and best of beings, whose will is perfect reason, the greatest good must arise from the obedience of all his rational subjects. By this chain the whole intellectual system is connected, and the infinite multitude of various and discordant wills of all intelligent creatures conspire to one divine end; and the purpose of infinite wisdom is accomplished in the social harmony of the universe. To this end, chastising or cutting off the refractory, is no less necessary, than a distribution of rewards to the virtuous and obedient. And thus the happiness of each individual is made to depend on his voluntary subjection to the order and good of the whole.

The greatest happiness of mankind in this world ariseth from their observance of the revealed will of their all-wise Creator and Governor. And their future happiness, when raised to a higher state of existence in another world, will arise, in a still higher degree, from their obedience to the will of God. For the greater powers and faculties any intelligent creature is

endued with, and the more enlarged his sphere of action, so much the greater are his obligations to know and obey the divine will; and the more momentous the consequence, both to himself and others, of his obedience or disobedience. This shews the vast importance of acquiring as early as possible an habitual reverence of the Supreme Being and attention to the discoveries of his will: that by being inured to piety and obedience in our present state, we may be qualified to enjoy a sublimer happiness, than this state affords. On the other hand, by laying aside the fear of God, and by indulging our evil inclinations in opposition to his known will, we shall not only be disqualified for enjoying the dignity of a higher state, but shall be utterly excluded from it, and, in just punishment of our negligence and disobedience, be doomed to eternal destruction.

The main purpose of our living in this world, and what is of greatest importance to be learned in it, is obedience. The constitution of nature is framed in order to train us up in the habits of obedience. To this end mankind are brought into the world in a state of infancy, weak, dependent, and absolutely subject to the direction and authority of parents; to the same end they are placed, when advanced to years of maturity, in a social and subordinate state, subject to human law and government. The whole procedure of events is continually teaching us, that we are not to make our own will the law of our actions, nor expect that everything should bend to our inclinations; but that we ought to be continually bending and moulding the temper of our minds, to a conformity with the constitutions of infinite wisdom, and the will of the Almighty sovereign of the world. All the divine dispensations, and particularly the revelation of the gospel, are directed to the same end; to establish the kingdom of God, or the habits of obedience to his will, in the minds of his rational creatures. Thus the frame of nature, the events of life, the dictates of reason, the doctrines of revelation, the obligations of duty and gratitude, the motives of hope and fear, the views of another world and an eternal state, all conspire to impress upon us a sense of obedience due to the will of the Supreme Governor and Father of the whole intelligent creation.

But why, O God, do we want reason to persuade us to do thy will? Is it not enough that it is thine? thine who art the

great Creator and Governor of the world, and hast the highest right to be served by all the creatures and by all the Powers which thou hast made? thine, who art the best and greatest Being; who art infinitely wise, holy, just, and true; and canst, therefore, command nothing but what suits thy nature? thine who art above all capacity of addition to thy happiness, and canst therefore propose no good but that of thy creatures, in the laws thou givest them. Why then do we inquire after the reason of thy will? It ought to satisfy us that it is *thine*. (ROGERS. BOURN.)

§ 85. The Obedience of the Angels as a Model for Men.
MATTHEW, vi. 10: *THY will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

IF Christ had been willing to propound the most impressive example for our encouragement to obey the divine will; he might have appealed to himself. When the justice of God demanded a suitable victim for its satisfaction, the language of Jesus was; "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God: yea, thy law is within my heart." In discharging his ministry, his food was to do the will of him who sent him. In offering his meritorious sacrifice, he was a willing victim: and even when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, we hear him uttering the language of entire resignation, "*Not my will, but thine be done.*"

But our Lord, in his Prayer, in condescension to our infirmities, has directed our emulative spirit to the contemplation of the Angels. What, then, are the chief particulars, in which, in reference to those holy Beings, we may do the will of God on earth, as they in heaven?

1. Let us aspire to their knowledge in the performance of duty. With regard to ourselves, in our understandings, there is much darkness, which hinders us from obtaining a lively perception of the Deity. In our will, there is much corruption, which renders us reluctant in assenting to divine truths. In our faculties, there is a weakness: so that even when we would do good, evil is present with us. But the Angels derive, from their immediate contemplation of God, the knowledge of what is most agreeable to his will. Let us implore that God, through

Christ, would equally open our eyes ; that he would enable us to see the wondrous things of his law ; that our obedience, like that of Angels, may go hand in hand with knowledge ; and the more we appreciate God's counsels, we may pray the more ardently, *Thy will be done.*

2. Let us imitate the Angels, in the affection of their obedience. When the pious and learned Hooker was lying on his death-bed, a friend took occasion to enquire his passing thoughts : to which he replied, that "he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order ; without which, peace could not be in heaven : and, oh ! that it might be so on earth." Of the Angels, happy in God's presence, to please him is their desire ; to adore him, is their blessedness ; to be commended by him, is their best reward. It is the purest and warmest gratitude, which prompts their hymn, *Holy, holy, holy, is the God of hosts : the whole earth is full of his glory.* So let *our* obedience be not a mere external service ; not the fear of slaves ; not a mercenary vassalage ; but let it proceed from an inward principle,—even from the best of motives, a fervent love of children towards a gracious Father. This delight to do his pleasure, renders the yoke of Christ light and easy ; and we proceed, with cheerfulness and alacrity, in the path of duty. The love of one common God is a bond of union to the Angels ; who therefore love each other. To have been redeemed by the same Saviour, should animate the hearts of his disciples with a similar concord in doing good. Suspicions and jealousies are apt to impede a benevolent unanimity, and too often we stand aloof from aiding some charitable design, merely because we cannot complete it in exact accordance to our own pre-conceived notions.

3. The Angels accomplish the will of God, without delay. He saith unto *one, Go ; and he goeth : and to another, Come, and he cometh.* They traverse, in a moment, the extent of creation, in doing his almighty biddings. To express the rapidity with which Angels serve, they are represented as having wings. Zeal for God's honour will impart wings to the Christian ; and bear him instantly and swiftly on all the errands of obedience. To linger in the path of duty, is the mark of one who is about to substitute excuses and evasions in the room of active exertions. Not to advance in duty, is to go backward. Wiser was

the resolution of David, 'I made haste; I delayed not to obey thy commandments.'

4. Let us emulate the Angels in their alacrity to promote the salvation of the human soul. St. Paul describes them as sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation. In what definite way, this ministration may be exerted; whether in suggesting good resolutions; or in strengthening vacillating purposes; or in plucking back from the brink of temptation; these are unknown matters, though much knowledge may be gained by meditating on their agency, such as is described in Holy Writ: but without some especial aid in our favour, it is hard to imagine that the spiritual ministry of Angels can be exercised. They are represented by our Saviour himself as touched with a holy joy on contemplating sinners reclaimed from the error of their ways. This holy joy let us labour to appreciate by becoming (as it were) ministering spirits for the salvation of our brethren. Let us not be sparing, but with discretion, in uttering friendly admonition. Let us be careful in exhibiting a Christian example. Let us labour, to the utmost of our means, in upholding and maintaining all efforts which are made to reclaim the penitent, and to spread abroad in heathen lands the tidings of salvation.

But our zeal in imitating the Angels must be exercised with such a degree of caution as may not carry us into idolatry. We worship God and pray to him through the mediation of Jesus Christ. We reverence the holy Angels as the ministers of the divine will: but as for praying to them (as the Romish Church enjoins) there is no precept for it in Scripture, nor any example of it, even in the idolatrous Church of Rome, for at least three hundred years after the death of our Saviour. The Scripture hath expressly forbidden all applications to the inhabitants of the invisible world, except the Supreme Being. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and *him only* shalt thou serve." "There is *one* God and *one* Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii. 5.) Accordingly we find that the Angel who appeared to St. John in the Revelation, forbids any religious honour to be paid to him, even when present: "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant: worship God." And when amongst the Colossians (ii. 18) some had affected unjustifiable practices of this kind, St. Paul censures them as

being in a very dangerous error: "Let no man beguile you of your reward, *in worshipping of Angels.*"

Instead of idolatrously worshipping, let us imitate, the Angels. If they who by excelling in wisdom, are better able to judge of the reasonableness of obedience than we are, submit to the government of God; shall we disobey? But let as many of us as hope to be enrolled in the rank of angels hereafter, study now to write after so fair a copy. Not that we can reach their lofty attainments: but the ambitious of excellence in godliness as in other pursuits, must propose to themselves the noblest patterns. Let us make it our care, as much as in us lies, by angelical piety and regularity of our lives, to restore the moral world to that symphony and uniform harmony wherein God made it; and not only pray, but also heartily endeavour, that the will of the great God may be done here on earth as it is in heaven. (HUT. NORRIS.)

§ 36. Supply of rational Wants. MATTHEW, vi. 11: *GIVE us this day our daily Bread.*

THE Greek word rendered by *daily*, might be translated *sufficient for our life*: what may strengthen us, from day to day, for serving God with cheerfulness and vigour.

The *three* former of the *six* petitions of the Lord's Prayer express our earnest desires that we, and all our fellow-creatures, may attain the great end of our Creation: that is, may understand, receive, and practise true religion, to God's honour, and our own eternal happiness: after which we proceed, in the three last, to ask of him the means to this end; such supplies of our wants, as will be needful for the performance of our duties. And they are comprehended under three heads more: the relief of our temporal necessities; the forgiveness of our past sins; and the assistance of his Grace against future temptations.

The first of these blessings we request, by saying, *Give us this day our daily bread.* The word Bread, as it frequently signifies in Scripture all sorts of food, so it may very naturally signify, what it doth in this Prayer, all sorts of things requisite in human life. This Agur meant, when he prayed that God would *find*

him with food (in the original it is *Bread*) *convenient for him*. And this we mean in common discourse, as often as we speak of persons getting their bread. But then it must by no means be extended beyond things requisite; those, without which we are unable either to subsist at all, or however conveniently and comfortably. Not that desires of further advantages in the world are universally unlawful. But they are so apt to enlarge, and swell into extravagant and sinful passions; into schemes of luxury, or vanity, or covetousness; that we have usually much more need to restrain and check, than authorize them, by asking the accomplishment of them from God; lest we be guilty of what St. James condemns, "asking amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts."

It is therefore only for such a share of worldly good, as to a reasonable and moderate mind will appear sufficient, that our Saviour allows us here to pray; in the spirit which Agur in the Prayer just mentioned, expresses, "Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." (Prov. xxx.) For indeed, though the temptations of extreme poverty are very great; yet the tendency of wealth and ease and power, to sensuality and pride and forgetfulness of God, is so exceedingly strong, that a well-instructed and considerate mind would rather submit, than choose to be placed in a condition of abundance and eminence. For preserving the order and conducting the affairs of the world, some must be in such stations: but let those who are, look well to their ways; and let none of their inferiors envy them.

It ought to be further observed here, that our blessed Lord hath not only confined us to pray for *our Bread*, but our *daily Bread*; to be given us, as we ask for it, day by day: intending, doubtless, to make us remember and acknowledge that our dependence on God is continual, from one moment to another: that they who have the most of this world, have it only during his pleasure; and are bound, both to ask, and receive, every day's enjoyment of it, as a new gift from him: while, at the same time, they who have least may be assured, that what he hath commanded them to pray for, he will ordinarily not fail to bestow upon them; by blessing their endeavours, if they are able to use

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endeavours ; or by stirring up the charity of others towards them if they are not.

But as to those who can labour, industry is the method by which God hath thought fit to give them their bread ; and, therefore, by which they ought to seek it. They have no title to it any other way ; St. Paul having directed “ that if any one will not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thess. iii.) So that applying for our daily bread to God, is far from excluding a proper care to use the appointed means of procuring it for ourselves. But if our care be a presumptuous one, and void of regard to the disposer of all things ; we provoke him to blast our fairest hopes. And if it be an anxious and distrustful one, we think injuriously of him to whom we pray ; who can as easily give us the bread of to-morrow, as he gave us that of yesterday. Nay, if our worldly cares, though they do not disquiet our minds, yet engross them ; if we carry our attention to this world so far as to forget the next ; or imagine ourselves to be securer in stores laid up for many years, than in God’s good providence ; this also is very unsuitable to the spirit, both of our Lord’s Prayer, and of his whole religion ; which commands us to “ seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and “ not to trust in uncertain riches, but in him, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” (Matt. vi. 33 ; 1 Tim. vi. 17.)

If we are enjoined to ask our bread *from God*, we are forbidden to accept it *from Satan* ; that is, to gain our subsistence by any unlawful means. All active exertions must be guided by the rules of the Gospel. Art thou gaining thy bread by over-reaching the ignorant and the necessitous ? Art thou an unjust guardian amassing thy treasures at the cost of the widow and the orphan ? Dost thou fill thy hand with the fruits of robbery and lawless violence ? Is thy coffer stored from speculation and extortion ? Is thy bread gained by committing or by promoting or by countenancing any one iniquity ? This bread is not the bread of God. This is the bitter food of Satan which he doles out to his wretched slaves. To him, thou prayest in mind ; and not to a righteous God. Thou art kneeling unto the enemy of thy soul : and unto him, and to him alone, dost thou direct the words, “ Give me, this day, my daily bread.”

Our Saviour enforces a lesson of charity and beneficence. He associates in our prayer all who have the same wants, when

he commands us to say, "Give *us our* daily bread." The heart of a child of God is a brotherly heart. He asks nothing but in the spirit of unity, fellowship, and Christian charity. He entreats for his brethren what he entreats for himself. His desires prompt him to impart in the spirit of his Saviour's injunction, "Freely ye have received, freely give." It is a dangerous contempt of God when our conduct is at variance with our prayers. Can any one of us suppose, that the mercies of God are intended to harden the heart, to enwrap it in a cold selfishness, and to lull us into the stagnant repose of some gorged and over-fed beast? We ask bread for ourselves: do no others hunger? We solicit health: are no others stretched on the bed of sickness? Not to break our bread with the hungry, in imitation of God's diffusive mercies, is to say, "Give *me my* bread: and as to the sufferings of a fellow-creature, let him lie at my door, and wistfully solicit the very crumbs which fall from my luxurious table." The chief means which God has provided for supplying the wants of the houseless poor, is the charity of the rich: and to beseech God that the poor may be relieved, and yet to withhold from them what God has designed for their relief, such a contradiction in conduct is that inconsistent hypocrisy, so strongly censured by St. James: "If a brother or sister be destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

When divine grace shall have enabled us to utter this petition with these holy dispositions, our minds will be elevated above material to spiritual things. We shall pass from nature unto grace. The bread which sustains the body, will remind us of the better aliment which invigorates the soul. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the living bread, which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.—Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."—Sacred words, which in a spiritual sense, may be applied to the sacramental symbols of the Lord's Supper. When that Holy Table has been spread, let us not, without any cause, unthankfully refuse to come. (SECKER, chiefly.)

§ 37. Remission of Sin or Debt. MATTHEW, vi. 12 :
FORGIVE *us our trespasses*.

From our temporal wants, we proceed to a much more important concern, our spiritual wants : and here we ask, in the first place, what is very fit we should ; pardon and mercy. *Forgive us our trespasses, or debts.*

Sin is here represented under the notion of a *debt* : and as our sins are many, they are called *debts*. Committing sin can never be a slight matter ; since it is behaving undutifully and ungratefully to our Creator, who has sovereign power over us, and shews continual goodness to us. We may be sure, therefore, that the punishment, due to the least sin, is such as will give us cause to wish from the bottom of our souls, that we had never done it. But the question is, whether God will so far accept this sense of guilt, this sorrow for past transgression of his righteous laws, as to be reconciled to us upon it. Since wickedness deserves punishment, it may be justly punished. Being sorry for it, is not being innocent of it. And the most careful obedience afterwards no more makes a compensation for what went before, than avoiding to run into a new debt pays off the old one : besides that we never obey so well, as not to add continually some degree of fresh misbehaviour. God indeed is merciful ; but he is equally righteous and holy, and abhorrent of sin. And what can the mere light of our own understandings discover to us, with any assurance, from these attributes joined ? We see, that in this world the most merciful rulers, if they are just and wise also, which God is, often punish even those offenders, who repent the most heartily. The honour and good order of their government require it. And why may he not have reasons of the same, or even of a different nature, for doing the same thing ?

Still the case of penitents must be more favourable, than that of others. And there is ground for all such to hope, that such pity as can, will be shewn them in some manner, though they cannot be sure how, or to what effect. And God hath been pleased to confirm this hope, from time to time, by various revelations, gradually unfolding his gracious designs : till by the coming of our blessed Lord, the whole purpose of his goodness

was opened ; as far as it is proper that mortals should be acquainted with it.

From these revelations, contained in the Bible, we learn, that repentance alone, even the completest, would not be sufficient to reinstate us fully in God's favour ; much less the poor endeavours towards it, which we of ourselves are capable of using : but that our pardon and salvation depend on the compassionate intercession of a Mediator appointed by our heavenly Father : that a person who should deliver mankind from the bitter fruits of their transgressions, had in general been promised, and the promise been believed, from the earliest ages ; and more particular notices of him gradually imparted to the successive generations of the chosen people : that at length in the season, which infinite wisdom saw to be fittest, he appeared on earth, in the character of the only-begotten Son of God ; taught his followers the precepts, and set them the example of perfect piety and virtue ; and after bearing cheerfully, for this purpose, all the inconveniences of mortal life, submitted to suffer a cruel death from wicked men, provoked by the perfections which they ought to have adored : that this voluntary sacrifice of himself, the Almighty was pleased to accept from him, whose divine nature, united to the human, gave it unspeakable value, as a reason for entering into a covenant of mercy with all those, who should be influenced, by faith in his doctrines, to obey his laws : that still neither our obedience, nor our faith itself, is at all meritorious, or in any degree the cause of our acceptance : for they are both of them God's gift : and they are both, through our fault, very imperfect : but yet that thankful belief in Christ, as our Saviour from the power and the punishment of sin working by love to our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our fellow-creatures, is appointed the condition of our obtaining, and the instrument of our receiving pardon.

The reasons of this appointments we see, as through a glass darkly ; yet enough of them to convince us of its being the wisdom of God, though in a mystery. (1 Cor. ii. 7.) With respect to the blessed Jesus, it was a fit reward for what he had done and suffered, to take those into favour again, for whom he had interested himself with such inexpressible goodness. And with respect to God, it was a strong demonstration of his concern for the glory of his attributes, and the honour of his govern-

ment, that he would not be reconciled to sinners on any other terms, than such an interposition of such a person in their behalf, which yet, since he himself provided, as well as accepted, his kindness to us is no less, than if he pardoned us without it. Thus then did "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and truth kiss each other; and God shew himself just, and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.)

While the merits of the great Mediator encourage us to solicit *forgiveness of sins*, various feelings will accompany the supplication.

In uttering this petition, we renounce our own moral excellence, and seek refuge in the righteousness of our Redeemer. In soliciting grace, we avow our inability of satisfying the divine justice by any merit of our own. In this matter is no middle course. We must expiate our sins by our works; or we must have recourse to a gratuitous pardon. But if God were to enter into judgment with his servants, no man living would be justified: so that unless God would freely forgive our debts, they would be chargeable against us for ever. Instead of saying, "Have patience, and I will pay thee all;" we must say, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies." In using our Lord's prayer, we virtually solicit that God would cover us with the merit of his Son; and that we may have redemption through his blood, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace.

This prayer should be uttered with a deep spirit of gratitude for the immense mercy which is implied in the remission of our spiritual debts. If we could fully appreciate the state of alienation between offending man and an offended God, then we should be able to span the dimensions of that Gospel-love which enables us to say with the filial hopes of reconciled children, "*Forgive us our trespasses.*" We upon whom death had passed as the wages of sin, have now the gift of everlasting life. With the creature rejected by heaven, and a vessel of wrath, contrast the glorious titles of "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Let the prodigal children, re-instated in the many mansions of a compassionate Father, raise the voice of gratitude and say, "Blessed is he to whom transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered; and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

We may contemplate forgiveness of sins with gratitude

and humility; but what avail those feelings without sincere *repentance*? An active contrition will render us more vigilant in avoiding what may have proved a stumbling-block to our feet, and more careful in labouring not to be polluted with the stains which God, for the sake of the Mediator, may have washed away. A repentance, evinced by amendment, is indispensable. "Wash you: make you clean: cease to do evil: learn to do well." To solicit pardon without grief for past transgression, and with indifference as to the future, is to ask permission to offend, rather than pardon for having offended. When the God of the Gospel opens to us the view of his compassions, it is that beholding them with an attentive eye, we may present unto God our bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God; which is our reasonable service.

Lastly: In the petition, *Forgive us our trespasses*, we trace the feeling of charity and brotherly compassion. Our prayer extends to all our neighbours, whose salvation we desire as our own. Our prayer is thus animated by that spirit of benevolence which is not bounded by its own especial interests. It was thus that Moses again and again renewed his prayers to God, that he would turn away his wrath from the people of Israel. It was thus Abraham again and again renewed his prayers for the efficacy of the righteous. It was thus the first martyr Stephen prayed, that God would not impute to the Jewish nation the sin of his murder which they were about to commit. Above all, the Saviour of the world has taught us to say, in a spirit of fellowship, "*Forgive us our trespasses*," by pronouncing, even upon the cross, those memorable words, "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." (SECKER, chiefly.)

§ 38. Forgiveness of offending Brethren. MATTHEW, vi. 12, 14, 15: *FORGIVE us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

OUR hope that God would extend forgiveness to our sins and trespasses against him, is qualified by our observance of an important condition; that we also forgive, as we hope to be

forgiven. In reference to this duty, two things ought to be understood: 1, What that forgiveness is to which, *in our private capacity*, we are bound; and 2, how far the exercise of it will avail us.

1. The obligation to forgiveness does not mean that private persons do amiss in bringing transgressors to justice; for neglecting it would be, in general, only a seeming kindness to them, and a real mischief to human society: not that we are forbid to make reasonable demands on such, as withhold our dues, or do us any damage; for recovering a debt is a very different thing from revenging an injury: nor are we always bound, when persons have behaved ill to us, either to think as well of them as before, which may be impossible; or to trust and favour them as much, which may be unwise. But our obligation to forgive means and absolutely requires, that, in our private capacity, we pass by all offences, which with safety to ourselves and the public, we can: that where we must punish, we do it with reluctance; and as gently, as the case will permit; and where we must defend or recover our rights, we do it with the least expense, and the least uneasiness to the adverse party, that may be: that we never be guilty of injustice to others, because they have been guilty of it to us; and never refuse them proper favours merely because we have been refused such favours by them; much less because we have not obtained from them what it was not fit that we should: that we look upon little provocations, as trifles; and be careful not to think great ones greater than they are: that we be willing to make those, who have displeased us, all such allowance to the full, as our common frailty and ignorance demand: that we always wish well to them; and be ready, as soon as ever we have real cause, to think well of them; to believe their repentance; and how great or many soever their faults may have been, to accept it; and restore them to as large a share of our kindness and friendship, as any wise and good person, uninterested in the question, would think safe and right: always remembering, in every case of injury, how very apt we are to err on the severe side; and how very much better it is, to err on the merciful one.

2. This is the temper of forgiveness to our fellow-creatures; and it is plainly a good and fit temper. Let us therefore now consider further, what influence it will have towards our Maker's

forgiving us. Our Saviour undoubtedly lays a peculiar stress on it for this purpose ; both by inserting it, as a condition, into the body of his prayer ; and insisting on it, as a necessary one, in his words immediately after the prayer. But still, we must observe, he doth not mention it as the cause, that procures our forgiveness : for “ *God saveth us not by this, or any other works of righteousness, which we do, but according to his mercy, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ ; that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs of eternal life.*” (Tit. iii. 5.) Our pardoning others is no more than a qualification, requisite to our receiving that final pardon from God, which our Saviour, through the divine goodness, hath merited by his death, on that condition. Nor is it the only qualification necessary, though it be a principal one. For the rest of God’s laws were given in vain, if observing this one would secure his favour : and *Christ* would be found *the Minister of sin*, if he had taught, that the single good disposition of forgiveness would be sufficient, let a person have ever so many bad ones. But it is plain, that throughout the whole Sermon on the Mount, on which this prayer is delivered, he makes the performance of every part of our duty the condition of our acceptance. In the very beginning of it, he hath promised heaven to several other virtues, as well as here to this ; and the meaning is, not that persons may get thither by any one that they will, for nobody sure is so bad as to have none at all, but that each of them shall have its proper share, in fitting us for that mercy and reward, which however with less than all of them, we shall never obtain. Our imperfections in all will indeed be pardoned : but not our continuance in a wilful neglect of any.

Still, though a spirit of forgiveness to our brother is by no means the whole that God requires in order to forgive us ; yet it is a quality, often so difficult, always so important, and so peculiarly needful to be exercised by us when we are entreating our Maker to exercise it towards us, that our Saviour had great reason to place it in the strong light which he hath done ; and even to place it single ; since his design could not easily be understood to be any other, than to engage our particular attention to what deserves it so much. For let it be considered that this merciful temper includes many Christian virtues, to which heaven is promised. *Humility* is the foundation of it. The

merciful man has a due sense of his own mistakes and sins; and is, therefore, moderate and gentle to those who are in error: whereas the proud man thinks it below him not to retaliate an injury. 2. This virtue of mercifulness to those who have trespassed against us, includes in it the noble grace of *self-denial*. There is nothing more contrary to flesh and blood, than to pass by an injury when we have it in our power to avenge it: and the man who has learned to resist such a clamorous passion as revenge, seems in a fair way to overcome all his other corruptions. 3. This virtue of mercifulness is a sure mark of our *love of God*: what better proof can be given of it, than a compliance with one of the most difficult precepts? Forgiveness of injuries may arise from other worse principles, such as cowardice, laziness, or hypocrisy: but this is not the evangelical forgiveness which Christ inculcates as necessary to come from the heart. Hypocrisy does not reach the heart, but contents itself with outward ostentation: cowardice is inclined to cruelty: and as for laziness, revenge is commonly the shortest way: whereas to gain over an adversary by forbearance is usually a work of time. 4. This mercifulness denotes a *love of our neighbour*. It is an easy thing to love our friends: but the difficulty is to love them who have injured us. 5. This placability prevents all the usual *occasions of quarrel*; interprets a neighbour's actions in the most candid and charitable sense: and restrains the tongue from injurious words which are commonly the sources of feuds and contention.

An implacable, immoderate, unrelenting temper is, on the other hand, the source of pride which magnifies trifles into serious injuries; converts the heart into the seat of the most malignant passions; delights in inflicting pain; cares not to conciliate and amend an offending brother; and deems its own violent dictates to be the standard of justice between man and man. The danger of such a disposition is awful indeed. If we will not for the love of God, and in obedience to his commands, pardon our fellow-creatures the few and small injuries which they are able to do us; (when perhaps we have done many things to provoke them, and comparatively can have done little to oblige and serve them) how should we ever expect, that God will forgive us the numerous and heinous offences which we have committed against him; from whom we have received all that

we have ; on whom we depend for our dearest hopes ; to whom, therefore, we owe the most unreserved duty and the most affectionate gratitude.

Let us, then, remember, that since we pray to be forgiven, only as we forgive ; so often as we use these words, we pray, in effect, for God's vengeance upon ourselves, instead of his mercy, if we forgive not. And therefore, let us apply to him continually for grace to do in earnest what we profess to do in this petition. Let us carefully examine our hearts and our conduct, that we may not cheat ourselves ; for we cannot cheat God with false pretences of observing this duty, while indeed we transgress it. "Let us utterly put away from us all bitterness and wrath and clamour and evil speaking with all malice ; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another ; *even as we hope that God, for Christ's sake, will forgive us.*" (Eph. iv. 31.) (SECKER. BLAIR.)

§ 39. Aid against Temptations. MATTHEW, vi. 13 : *LEAD us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, or the wicked one.*

WE should be very unfit to ask for the pardon of our past sins, and could neither hope to obtain it, nor continue long the better for it, if we did not earnestly desire, at the same time, to avoid sin for the future. And therefore the petition, "*Forgive us our trespasses,*" most properly follows, "*Lead us not into temptation.*"

The word *temptation* very often signifies no more than *trial* ; any opposition or difficulty which may call forth our virtues into vigorous practice : but the word here means any solicitation to sin, any allurements to commit iniquity.

The word *evil* may mean all kind and occasion of evil ; but the context seems to confine the word in reference to Satan, who in Scripture is often called "The evil" or "wicked One." The deliverance solicited implies protection from falling into evil, or from the power and seduction of the evil one.

The phrase of *God's leading men into temptation*, it is evident, must be understood according to the analogy of scripture language ; which, because nothing can come to pass without

God's permission, does therefore usually, in acknowledgment of the supreme superintendency of Divine Providence over all events, ascribe everything figuratively to God. As when God is said to have delivered a man, who is slain by chance, into the hand of his neighbour; to have moved David, by means of Satan's temptations, to number Israel and Judah; to have hardened Pharaoh's heart; to have blinded the eyes, and made fat, or stupid, the heart of the people; to have sent forth a lying spirit among Ahab's prophets; to have hardened the spirit of Sihon king of Heshbon, and made his heart obstinate; to have hardened the nations to come against Israel to battle, that he might destroy them utterly; to have put it in the hearts of evil princes, to give their kingdom unto the beast or false prophet; to send upon men a strong delusion; and, in the phrase we are now speaking of, to lead men into temptation: it is plain, in all these expressions the intention is not to affirm (except perhaps in some judicial cases) that God, actually and efficiently, does these things; but only, that in the course of his all-wise providence, he justly permits them to come to pass. Wherefore, when our Saviour teaches us to pray that God would not lead us into temptation; the meaning is, that he would be pleased so to order and direct things by his all-wise providence in this probation-state, as not to suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but that he would with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. And particularly, that he would not judicially, and in anger, give us up and leave us to the power of temptation, and to the seducements of the evil one; as he did Pharaoh and Ahab, and Judas, and the Israelites in the wilderness, when (as the Psalmist expresses it) "he gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations." But that on the contrary, he would either, by his preventing mercy, keep us from "the hour of temptation" (Rev. iii. 10), or, by his gracious support, "deliver us out of it." (2 Pet. ii. 9.)

I. Numerous are the motives which should induce us to breathe this prayer, in a spirit of humility and caution.

Consider what the Scriptures assert in relation to the infirmity of our nature. There is none that doeth good; no, not one.—The human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.—We proudly affirm that we are rich and have

not need of anything; and know not that we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.—Shall we then refuse to say, “*Lead us not into temptation?*”

Consider the nature of temptation. At one time we are placed on some lofty mountain, that the view of worldly grandeur may seduce us from the worship of God. At another time, hunger, poverty, worldly distress, tend to create in our minds a doubt of God’s paternal providence. Youth is often attended with forgetfulness of God; manhood, with worldly anxiety; ease, with indolence; learning, with intellectual pride; wealth, with luxury. The covetous are tempted with gain; the ambitious, with preferment; the voluptuous, with sensual pleasure. All conditions of life have their respective hazards. And sometimes these hazards are so dreadfully heightened by particular circumstances; and, at others, trying incidents, totally unforeseen, happen so unseasonable, that though they may only rouse and animate our virtue, yet they may also, more probably, overbear and destroy it. And therefore we must know very little of our natural frailty, the strength of our passions, and the deceitfulness of sin; if we do not think it the more prudent, as well as modester part, to decline, than venture the conflict, if it be God’s will: and do not accordingly beg of him, that he would *not lead us into such temptation*. Our Blessed Lord hath warned us by the injunction, “*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*” But if the sensualist neglect this warning by reading such books or by indulging such thoughts as awaken impure desires; or if the drunkard cling to those companions among whom his Christian sobriety has been shipwrecked; what can be said of these reckless men but that they have become tempters to themselves?

II. The caution with which this petition should be uttered, is not intended to plunge us into despair: we are authorized by the word *deliver*, to believe that deliverance from approaching temptation can be accorded: or the prayer is empty words. What an encouraging declaration is that of St. Paul! “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation, make a way also to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” If Satan desire to have God’s saints that he may sift them as wheat, Christ will

pray for them that their faith may be strengthened. (Luke, xxi. 31.) Christ commenced his ministry by baffling the enemy of our souls; and by that victory encourages his followers. Satan is represented under the emblem of strength, violence, and ferocity; but an apostle assures us that our resistance is his discomfiture. That there should be evil Angels, as well as evil men, of the greatest abilities and accomplishments, is, if rightly considered, no great wonder: and that both should incite us to sin, is no reasonable discouragement: for let us but apply to God, and we shall not be left in the power of either. What the power of wicked spirits is, we are not told in Scripture: and it is no part of religion, in the least, to believe idle stories about them. Of this we are sure, that they have no power but what God permits: and he will never permit them to do, what shall prove in the end, any hurt to those, who serve and fear him. More especially we are sure, that they cannot in the least, either force us into sinning, or hinder us from repenting. Invite or dissuade us they may, by suggesting false notions of the pleasure, or profit, or harmlessness of sin; by representing God, as too good to be angry, or too severe to be reconciled; by describing to our imaginations, repentance to be so easy at any time, that it is needless now; or so difficult now, that it is too late and impossible; by putting it into our thoughts, that we are so good, we may be confident and careless; or so wicked, we must absolutely despair. It concerns us therefore greatly, "not to be ignorant of their devices." But provided we keep on our guard; earnestly apply to God, and are true to ourselves; neither their temptations, nor those of the whole world, shall prevail against us. For then only, as St. James (i. 14) gives us to understand, is "every man tempted dangerously, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The enemy within therefore is the most formidable one: and against this it is chiefly, that we are to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation."

But if, through pride or negligence, we will not ask for his help, we must not expect it. And though we do for form's sake ask it, if we have little faith in it, or dependence on it, St. James hath foretold the event: "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Yet on the other hand, if we carry our dependence so far, as presumptuously to run into

those dangers, out of which we beg him to keep us ; or at least, will do little or nothing to keep ourselves out of them, instead of doing everything that we can ; or if in the dangers, in which he may think fit to place us, we will not use our best endeavours to stand, as well as pray that we may not fall ; such prayers can never be likely to avail for our protection. But fervent devotion, hearty resolution, and prudent care, united, and continued, will do anything. By whatever difficulties we are surrounded, and how little possibility soever we may see of getting through them : still "commit thy way unto the Lord, put thy trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass." (Psalm xxxvii. 5.)

The courage of a Christian will be confirmed by adverting to the conduct of the saints, to whom God has never been wanting in their hour of trial : so that to excuse our timid frailty in yielding to temptations by urging that they are irresistible, is a plea wholly inadmissible.

Can we reflect on what the Martyrs did and suffered, and still maintain that the solicitations of sense are not to be controlled ? They were men who had the same sense of pleasure and pain which we have. The temptation of reigning custom is formidable : yet Lot lived in a city where ten good men could not be found ; and when all flesh had become corrupt, Noah walked with God. The splendour and luxury of a court are dazzling : yet Moses preferred affliction with the people of God. Job was tempted to throw off all trust in providence : and yet he declares, "though God slay me, I will trust in him." Revenge is one of the most violent and importunate passions : yet David spared his persecutor Saul, though slumbering defenceless at his feet. Human nature, when aided by grace, cannot now be inferior to what it was then. And does not the word *temptation* mean *trial* ? But if we cannot but yield, temptation is not a trial in any sense. And what is grace ? Let us not affirm, that grace can be unequal to the occasion for which God vouchsafes it.

The preceding observations suggest two inferences.

1. If we pray that God may not lead us into temptation, what censure can be too strong for us when we lead others into temptation ? Sometimes, the language of unblushing profligacy is unreserved : "Come with us : let us lurk privily

for the innocent." At other times we are unconscious of our guilt, or somewhat insensible to its effects: but, in reality, every word or deed on our part, tending to weaken a religious feeling among our domestics and throughout the whole sphere of our influence, is a leading of others into temptation.

2. Lastly: if by praying not to be led into temptation, we acknowledge the possibility of transgressing, let this sense of frailty awaken a spirit of candid allowance in behalf of others; who are virtually included in the word *us*. Our spiritual pride is the sure fore-runner of our own fall. Let us not forget the precept of St. Paul, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." (SECKER. ATTERBURY.)

§ 40. The Doxology. MATTHEW, vi. 13: *FOR thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

THE preceding words are not found in the Gospel of St. Luke, xi. In all probability, our Lord who delivered this form twice upon different occasions, might add this clause at the first time; and leave it out at the second. The words themselves are admirably adapted to the preceding subjects. The whole prayer is concluded by ascribing to our heavenly Father, the praise due unto his name: acknowledging here more expressly, what indeed hath been throughout implied, that his is *the kingdom*, the rightful authority and supreme dominion over all: his *the power*, by which everything just and good is brought to pass; his therefore *the glory* of whatever we his creatures do, or enjoy, or hope for; of whatever this universe, and the whole scheme of things which it comprehends, hath had, or now hath, or ever shall have in it, awful or gracious, and worthy of the admiration of men and angels. And as all dignity and might and honours are his; so they are his *for ever and ever*: originally, independently, and unchangeably. From everlasting to everlasting he is God; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

These words then are, at once, an act of homage to his greatness, and thanksgiving to his goodness: both which ought ever to have a place in our prayers; and the conclusion is a

very proper place. For the infinite perfections of God our Maker, which we thus celebrate, are the best reason possible for every petition that we have offered to him, and therefore our blessed Lord introduces them as the reason. *For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory.* Besides, ending with these acknowledgments will leave them fresh and strong upon our minds: especially as we finish all with that solemn asseveration, *Amen*; which is a word used in Scripture, only upon serious and important occasions, to confirm the truth and sincerity of what is promised, wished, or affirmed. It relates therefore equally to the whole of the prayer: and is in effect declaring, that we do heartily believe whatever we have said, and heartily desire whatever we have asked.

This expression therefore may remind us, that our prayers should always be composed, both in such a language, and in such words in that language, as all that are to use or join in them, are well acquainted with. For else, as St. Paul argues, "How shall he, that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say, *Amen*: seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (1 Cor. xiv. 16.)

And it should likewise remind us very strongly of another thing, if possible, yet more important: that we should never say to God, what we cannot say with the utmost truth of heart. Now with what truth, or what face, can any person, that lives in any sin, repeat the prayer which our Lord hath taught us, and say *Amen* to it; when every sentence in it, if well considered, is inconsistent with a bad life? Let us therefore consider both it and ourselves very carefully, that we may offer up our devotions always in an acceptable manner. For "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." Such is that admirable form of prayer which our Lord gave to his disciples, after cautioning them against all ostentation in their devotions.

This prayer stands unrivalled in every circumstance that constitutes the perfection of prayer, and the excellence of that species of composition. It is concise, it is perspicuous, it is solemn, it is comprehensive, it is adapted to all ranks, conditions, and classes of men; it fixes our thoughts on a few great important points, and impresses on our minds a deep sense of the goodness and the greatness of that Almighty Being to whom it is addressed.

It begins with acknowledging him to be our most gracious and merciful Father ; it begs that his name may everywhere be revered, that his religion may spread over the earth, and that his will may be obeyed by men with the same ardour and alacrity and constancy that it is by the angels in heaven. It next entreats the supply of all our essential wants, both temporal and spiritual ; a sufficiency of those things that are absolutely necessary for our subsistence ; the forgiveness of our transgressions, on condition that we forgive our brethren ; and, finally, support under the temptations that assault our virtue, and deliverance from the various evils and calamities that everywhere surround us ; expressing at the same time the utmost trust and confidence in the power of God, to grant whatever he sees it expedient and proper for his creatures to receive.

The full meaning then of this admirable prayer, and of the several petitions contained in it, may perhaps be not improperly expressed in the following manner :

O thou great Parent of the universe, our Creator, our Preserver, and continual Benefactor, grant that we and all reasonable creatures may entertain just and worthy notions of thy nature and attributes, may fear thy power, admire thy wisdom, adore thy goodness, rely upon thy truth ; may reverence thy holy name, may bless and praise thee, may worship and obey thee.

Grant that all the nations of the earth may come to the knowledge and belief of thy holy religion ; that it may everywhere produce the blessed fruits of piety, righteousness, charity, and sobriety ; that by a constant endeavour to obey thy holy laws, we may approach as near as the infirmity of our nature will allow, to the more perfect obedience of the angels that are in heaven ; and thus qualify ourselves for entering into thy kingdom of glory hereafter.

Feed us, we beseech thee, with food convenient for us. We ask not for riches and honours : give us only what is necessary for our comfortable subsistence in the several stations which thy providence has allotted to us : and, above all, give us contented minds.

We are all, O Lord, the very best of us, miserable sinners. Be not extreme, we beseech thee, to mark what we have done amiss, but pity our infirmities, and pardon our offences. Yet

let us not dare to implore forgiveness from thee, unless we also from our hearts forgive our offending brethren.

We are surrounded, on every side, with temptations to sin ; and such is the corruption and frailty of our nature, that without thy powerful succour we cannot always stand upright. Take us then, O gracious God, under thy almighty protection ; and amidst all the dangers and difficulties of our Christian warfare, be thou our refuge and support. Suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but send thy Holy Spirit to strengthen our own weak endeavours, and enable us to escape or to subdue all the enemies of our salvation.

Preserve us also, if it be thy blessed will, not only from spiritual, but from temporal evil. Keep us ever by thy watchful providence, both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls ; that, thou being in all cases our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal as finally to lose not the things eternal.

Hear us, O Lord our Governor, from heaven thy dwelling-place : and when thou hearest, have regard to our petitions. They are offered up to thee in the fullest confidence that thy goodness will dispose, and thy power enable thee to grant whatever thy wisdom sees to be convenient for us, and conducive to our final happiness. (SECKER. PORTEUS.)

§ 41. Duty of Fasting. MATTHEW, vi. 16-18: MOREOVER, *when ye privately fast, be not as the hypocrites, assuming a dismal air : for they disfigure their countenances by leaving them unwashed and squalid ; that by their mournful looks, they may appear unto men to fast : verily, I say unto you, they will receive their reward in human applause, and have not any to expect from God. 17. But thou when thou keepest a private fast, and comest into public from thy devout retirement, dress thyself just as thou dost at other times : anoint thine head with oil, instead of sprinkling ashes upon it ; and wash thy face : 18, that thou mayest not appear unto men as one that fasteth, but only unto thy Father who is in secret ; and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.*

In the preceding words of our Saviour, we observe (1) a supposition, that religious fasting would be adopted amongst his

followers: *When ye fast*; and (2) a caution against fasting in a hypocritical manner: *be not like the hypocrites*.

The Jews, from the early times of their commonwealth, observed many public fasts. The prophets often enjoined them. The most exemplary persons adopted this mode of humiliation. Anna the prophetess served God with fasting and prayers. The disciples of John fasted oft. Nor does Jesus condemn any part of these things; but by regulating the manner of it, he plainly treats it as a practice intended for perpetual use. If our Lord had not designed, that fasting should be considered as a duty, he would never have promised a reward to the right performance of it, as he doth in the 18th verse. He not only fasted himself, but declared, that though then his disciples did not fast, yet after 'he was taken from them, they should.' Accordingly, we read in the following chapters of the Acts, that congregations, under the guidance of prophets and apostles, fasted on more occasions than one: and St. Paul enjoins private persons to 'give themselves at times to fasting and prayer.' The whole Christian Church, from the beginning, hath both esteemed and practised it not a little; and to this day both the ecclesiastical and civil powers continue to prescribe it.

If, then, we have any regard to the example and experience of good persons, to the injunctions and commands of our earthly superiors, or to the authority of Scripture itself, we cannot think fasting an observance to be either blamed or slighted. But for yet fuller satisfaction, and, indeed, for our direction also, let us enquire more particularly, what its meaning and uses are.

One very useful meaning of fasting is, to express our sorrow for having offended God, and our sense of not deserving the least of his favours. Abstaining for some time from our daily food signifies, most naturally, that we are unworthy of it; and can take no comfort in it, whilst we are under the Divine displeasure.

And, besides the good effects fasting may have, as a strong outward mark of repentance, it may be a cause of our feeling greater degrees of inward conviction. All, who pass their days in the free enjoyment of plenty, have need frequently to interrupt their indulgences, however lawful in their nature; and to view the state of their souls with attentive thoughtfulness; which

abstinence, and its proper companion retirement, would beget. Such restraint will usually, for the time, lower our passions into some good measure of composedness, and make our sorrow for sin humbler and deeper : on both which accounts, fasting is called, in Scripture, 'afflicting the soul ;' for it mortifies the desires of the sensitive part, and enlivens the remorse of the rational. By these means, it may contribute much to render our faith of invisible things more lively, and our devotions more fervent : for which reason, fasting is always understood in Scripture, to be accompanied by prayer.

But fasting not only assists humiliation and devotion, but is in other ways also friendly to virtue. If we have been seduced into unlawful pleasures of sense, or even are in danger of it only, fasting withdraws the fuel from irregular desires ; proves to us by experience, and strengthens by use, our ability of bridling our natural appetites ; and so prevents our undoing ourselves, by trusting vainly to the plea of human infirmity, as an excuse for deliberate transgression, or supine negligence. Exercises of moderate hardship were recommended even by heathen moralists, as teaching contempt of low gratifications, and the blandishments of luxury. But far stronger inducements have we Christians to take the most effectual methods for exalting our souls above these things : as we know, to a much higher degree of certainty, that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God ;' that they who 'live in pleasure, are dead whilst they live.'

Fasting contributes to abate that 'pride of heart,' which the Prophet Ezekiel, in the case of Sodom and Jerusalem, connects with 'fulness of bread.' We often find the same persons, when pampered into luxuriant health, overbearing, impatient of contradiction, outrageous in anger, who, when voluntary or necessary abstinence hath reduced them to a calmer state of mind, are considerate, reasonable, and humane. But particularly it inspires humanity and compassion to the poor. For it gives us experience, from time to time, of what the poor are often forced to feel ; and not only reminds all persons, but better enables those of middling circumstances, by lessening their expenses on themselves, to relieve the wants of their indigent brethren. For this reason, the prophet Isaiah introduces God himself saying, "Is not this the fast I have chosen,—to deal thy bread to the

hungry ; that thou bring the poor to thy house ; that thou cover the naked ; and hide not thyself from thine own flesh."

II. Though fasting may be attended with many spiritual blessings, yet from the words of our Saviour 'Be not as the hypocrites' we may draw a general caution against using this practice amiss.

Our Lord has not prescribed definitively when, how long, how often, we should fast ; health and other things being to be consulted for the decision of those particulars. Eating or not eating is to be measured by its tendency to make us good or bad, better or worse : so that every one is bound to examine impartially his own state and circumstances, in order to ascertain whether fasting proves more conducive to his mortifying his lusts, and a readier help to prayer and repentance, than a continual sober and moderate diet ; and direct his practice accordingly.

For those who observe constantly a diet sufficiently low, perhaps too low, to superadd other fasts may be prejudicial, not only to their healths, but to their moral dispositions, and their very understandings. It may render them less capable of serious reflection and religious exercises : it may unfit them to go through their proper business in common life : it may incline them strongly to moroseness of temper. But further yet : low-spirited and scrupulous persons may, for want of supporting their strength of body, on which the firmness of the mind in part depends, by a sufficient quantity of food, increase their fears and perplexities most surprisingly ; till at length there will scarce remain a single action, that they can do or abstain from with a quiet conscience. And, on the other hand, persons of warm and enthusiastic imaginations are heated by long and strict fasts beyond any thing : till they feel impulses, hear voices, see visions ; forget the world to which they belong, and live in a new one of their own creation.

Fasting consists in abstaining, wholly or in part, from our ordinary food. But still this abstinence may, to some persons, be no self-denial. There are many, to whom several sorts of fish are more delicious, than land animals ; and perhaps full as nutritive. Nay, methods have been invented, by which the palate is hardly ever so much pleased, as when it is pretended to

be mortified. The true direction then concerning the fare of our fasting seasons, is that which the example of the prophet Daniel furnishes,—‘in those days I ate no pleasant bread:’ that is, nothing contrived to gratify or provoke the appetite, but the plainest of wholesome diet. That we ought to be full as abstemious in what we drink, as in what we eat, is very clear; and both are put on a level in the same passage of Daniel: ‘neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth.’

But though we observe, in the rightest manner, everything that relates to the outward act; yet bodily exercise, of this or any other kind, profiteth little, unless it be performed with good and proper dispositions of soul. Even the truest and greatest of virtues cannot deserve the pardon of past iniquities and the recompense of future happiness; but only to qualify us to receive them from God’s mercy, granted for the sake of our Blessed Redeemer. When the hypocrites, in our Saviour’s time, made, by their mournful looks, a public ostentation of their private abstinence, he told them plainly, that being seen and admired of men should be their only reward; and directed his disciples to conceal, as far as conveniently might be, their voluntary self-denials of this kind: ‘that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which seeth in secret.’ When the vain-glorious Pharisee fasted twice a week, and despised the poor publican, he had infinitely better never have fasted once in his life, and been humble in his heart. Let us conscientiously beware of vain-glory, or superstition, or any other error, in respect of religious mortifications: neither treat ourselves with unprofitable harshness nor with hurtful indulgence; neither exalt the means into the same rank with the end, nor hope to arrive at the end without the means. Let us, after the example of the holy Apostle, with strict but prudent discipline, *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*. For “every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we, an incorruptible.” (SECKER.)

§ 42. Lay up imperishable Treasures. MATTHEW, vi. 19-21: *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth; where the moth may spoil your finest garments, and a canker consume*

your corn or your hoarded metals ; and where thieves may dig through your walls, and steal : 20, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven ; where neither moth nor canker can consume, and where thieves cannot dig through nor steal. 21. For where that which you account your chief treasure is, there will your heart also be, and thither your actions will be referred.

SPLENDID garments, corn, and precious metals, constituted the chief treasures of the ancients. (See BURDER'S Orient. Cust. p. 104.) The dwellings of the poor were frequently formed of mud : which thieves might easily dig through. (T. H. HORNE, vol. iii. p. 378 and 403.)

There are two things which offer themselves to mankind as rivals for their affections ; to wit, God and the world : the things of this present life, and of the future. And the whole strength of our Saviour's discourse bears upon this supposition, that it is impossible for a man to fix his heart upon both. For a man must first have two hearts, and two souls, and two selves, before he can give an heart to God, and an heart to the world too. And therefore, Christ does not state this matter, upon a bare priority of acquisition, as if he had bid men first lay up treasures for themselves in Heaven, and after that, allowed them, with the same earnestness, to provide themselves treasures here on earth likewise, (and so, by that means successively grasp the full happiness of both worlds :) for he knew, that the very nature of the thing itself made this impracticable, and not to be effected ; forasmuch as the acquisition of either world would certainly engage and take up the whole man, and consequently leave nothing of him to be employed about acquiring the other.

Whereupon Abraham speaking to the rich man in the Gospel, who had flourished in his purple, and fine linen, and fared deliciously every day, tells him, "That he, in his lifetime, had received *his* good things." *His* they are, called emphatically *his* by peculiar choice. They were the things he chiefly valued and pitched upon, as the most likely to make him happy ; and consequently, having actually enjoyed them, and thereby compassed the utmost of his desires, his happiness was at an end ; he had his option ; and there was no farther provision for him in the other world : nor indeed was it possible that he should find any, where he had laid up none. Those words of our Saviour being

most assuredly true, whether applied to men's endeavours after the things of this life, or of another: "that verily they have their reward." That is to say, the result and issue of their labours will still be suitable to the end, which governed and directed them. For where men sow, there they must expect to reap; it being infinitely absurd to bury their seed in the earth, and to expect a crop in heaven.

It being clear therefore, that a man cannot set his heart both upon God, and the world too, as his treasure, or chief good; let us, in the next place, see which of these two bids highest for this great prize, the heart of man. And since there are but these two, there cannot be a more expedite way to evince, that it belongs to God, than by proving the absurdity of placing it upon the world.

If we consider the world absolutely in itself, we shall find the most valued enjoyments of it embased by these two qualifications: (1.) That they are perishing. And, (2.) That they are out of our power: one of them expressed by *moths and rust corrupting them*; and the other, by *thieves breaking through, and stealing them*. The first representing them, as subject to decay from a principle within; the second, as liable to be forced from us, by a violence from without.

(1.) And first, for the perishing state and quality of all these worldly enjoyments: a thing so evident, or rather obvious to common sense and experience, that no man in his right wits can really doubt of it; and yet so universally contradicted by men's practice, that scarce any man seems to believe it. No, though the Spirit of God in Scripture is as full and home in the character it gives of these things, as experience itself can be; sometimes expressing them by fashions, which we know are always changing; and sometimes by shadows, which no man can take any hold of; and sometimes by dreams, which are all mockery and delusion: thus degrading the most admired grandeurs of the world from realities to bare appearances, and from appearances to mere nothings.

Nor do they fail only, and lose that little worth they have, but they do it also by the vilest and most contemptible things in nature; by *rust and cankers, moths and vermin*, things which grow out of the very subject they destroy, and so make the destruction of it inevitable. All sublunary comforts imitate the

changeableness, as well as feel the influence of the planet they are under. Time, like a river, carries them all away with a rapid course; they swim above the stream for a while, but are quickly swallowed up, and seen no more. The very monuments men raise to perpetuate their names, consume and moulder away themselves, and proclaim their own mortality as well as testify that of others.

But now, on the other side, the treasures proposed to us by our Saviour, are indefectible in their nature, and endless in their duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the stars and orbs above, which shine with the same undiminished lustre, and move with the same unwearied motion, with which they did from the first date of their creation. Nay, the joys of heaven will abide, when these lights of heaven shall be put out; and when sun and moon, and nature itself shall be discharged their stations, and be employed by providence no more; the righteous shall then appear in their full glory; and being fixed in the Divine presence, enjoy one perpetual and everlasting day; a day commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God himself.

(2.) The other degrading qualifications of these worldly enjoyments, is, that they are out of our power. And surely, that is very unfit for a man to account his treasure, which he cannot so much as call his own; nor extend his title, so far as the very next minute; as having no command, nor hold of it at all, beyond the present actual possession; and the compass of the present (all know) is but one remove from nothing. A rich man to-day, and a beggar to-morrow, is neither new nor wonderful in the experience of the world. For he, who is rich now, must ask the rapacity of thieves, pirates, and tyrants, how long he shall continue so; and rest content to be happy for just so much time, as the pride and violence, the cruelty and avarice, of the worst of men shall permit him to be so; a comfortable tenure, doubtless, for a man to hold his chief happiness by.

Nor has the providence of God thought it worth while to secure the very best of men in their rights to any enjoyment under heaven; and all this, to depress and vilify these things in their thoughts; that so they may, every day, find a necessity of placing them above, and of bestowing their pains upon that, which if they pursue, they shall obtain; and if they obtain, they

shall keep. "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," says our Saviour, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Why? What was the difference? He tells us in John, xvi. 22, "Your joy no man taketh from you." It was such a joy or peace, as was to be above the reach of either fraud or force, artifice or assault; which can never be said of any earthly enjoyment whatsoever; either as to the acquisition, or possession of it: God having made no man any promise, that by all his virtue and innocence, all his skill and industry, he shall be able to continue in health, wealth, or honour; but that after his utmost endeavour to preserve those desirable things, he may, in the issue, lose them all.

But God has promised and engaged to mankind, that whosoever shall faithfully and constantly persevere in the duties of a pious, Christian life, shall obtain an eternal crown of glory, and an inheritance that fadeth not away. Estates, pleasures, and greatness of the world, all these are without the man, and consequently may be taken from him; and which is yet worse, may do him no good, even while they stay with him. But the conscience is a sure repository for a man to lodge and preserve his treasure in; and the chest of his own heart can never be forced open.

In fine, this we may with great boldness venture to affirm, that if men would be at half the pains to provide themselves treasures in heaven, which they are generally at to get estates here on earth, it were impossible for any man to perish. But when we come to earthly matters, we act; when to heavenly, we only discourse: Heaven has our tongue and talk; but the earth, our whole man besides.

Nevertheless, let men rest assured of this, that God has so ordered the great business of their eternal happiness, that their affections must still be the forerunners of their persons, the constant harbingers appointed by God to go, and take possession of those glorious mansions for them; and consequently, that no man shall ever come to Heaven himself, who has not sent his heart thither before him. For where this leads the way, the other will be sure to follow. (DEAN SOUTH.)

§ 43. Effect of good and bad Principles. MATTHEW, vi. 22, 23: Do not overvalue the world. For as *the eye is the lamp of the whole body*; and therefore, on the one hand, *if thine eye be clear*, and free from film and any vitiating humour, *thy whole body will be full of light*: 23, *but*, on the other hand, *if thine eye be distempered*, *thy whole body will be full of darkness*: so it is with respect to your judgment as to the worth of earthly and heavenly enjoyments. *If therefore, the light that is in thee, be darkness, how great is that darkness!* If your maxims are wrong, your conduct must be erroneous.

IF we suppose these words to have a strict connexion with the preceding and following passage, we must understand by the *single eye*, liberality; and by the *evil eye*, covetousness; but from the bad influence of covetousness, we may advance to a general doctrine; the necessity of caution of not suffering ourselves to be carried away by any corrupt passion or inordinate affection; upon account of the bad effect this will have upon all our actions. What the eye is to the body, that is the mind or understanding to the moral conduct of man. If the eye be *clear*, the limbs may be safely moved. If the eye be overgrown with film, we cannot direct our steps: if our understanding be corrupted with false principles; if what was intended to give light, be dim; we shall walk in a moral darkness; and our conduct will be as erroneous as our maxims.

Let us consider, more distinctly, the different effects of the clear and dim eye, or of good and bad principles.

Whoever is guided and regulated by a firm Christian principle, will never violate his conscience; he does not believe right and wrong to be defined by human laws; but believes himself to be under obligations antecedent to all human constitutions. By implicitly believing the unspeakable and endless happiness of another life, he will never be ensnared into a forgetfulness of himself: he is a stranger and pilgrim in this world; and for that reason, he abstains from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Of whatever kind the temptation be, his answer is still the same: *Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but of men.* As long as he keeps his eye *clear* and free from film, and retains a right relish for spiritual things; he will see objects in a clear and

distinct light ; and will not easily be imposed upon through the deceitfulness of sin. If at any time, he falls, through weakness or inadvertency, ignorance or surprise, the good principles which are rooted in him, will, through the grace of God, prove a powerful means of raising him up. He will reflect, with shame and remorse, that he has deserted the cause he has espoused. He will be exceedingly sorrowful, until, by God's blessing upon his penitence, he has corrected what was amiss, and brought his practice to an agreement with his principles.

This godly sorrow is intimately connected with the affections of the heart, which possess a very extensive influence for good or evil. A man, thus affected in heart, will feel an ingratitude in sin, and therefore erects a higher standard of religion, in reference to the necessity of a Mediator. His sincere desire to serve God leads him to embrace a more correct and scriptural system of doctrines. His devotion becomes the source of the noblest enjoyment ; and his happiness is of a more spiritual nature. Duties wear a more pleasing aspect, and are performed from inclination. The favour of God is the great object of his wishes. He aims at universal obedience. His progress in holiness corresponds to the excellence of its principle : a sinful mind is gradually transformed into the divine image ; so that his path is the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Consider, on the other hand, the influence of bad principles or of a corrupted heart.

It is necessary for us to have some principles or other, if we would have our life answer any purpose. Without this, we are the double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Next to this, it is worse to have no good principle ; no true principles of true religion : for without these, we shall be ever varying ; as the complexion of our body, or the temper of our mind, or the circumstances of external affairs, happen to alter. We shall be superstitious, at one time : careless or profane, at another : now a sceptick, and then a dogmatist : of one religion to-day ; and of another, to-morrow ; the next day, neither ; and at last, perhaps, of no religion at all.

But suppose, that instead of the bare want of good principles, a man has an evil eye, a dim and obscured eye ; even a corrupt judgment and an erroneous conscience ; to what spiritual

dangers will not such a man be exposed ! His whole body is full of darkness. The iniquity he commits, he does not see to be such. But if the weakness and depravity of our natures be such, that, even with firm Christian convictions, we cannot always stand upright ; what will become of us, if our minds are stocked with bad principles ? We shall then fall with double force, and our recovery will be exceeding difficult. When temptations from without meet with ill principles from within ; they will take fast hold of us, and we shall be led captive by the devil at his will. When ‘the light that is in us, is darkness,’ what a hideous darkness will then overwhelm us ! And ‘when the blind lead the blind, it must needs be that both fall into the ditch.’ If, therefore, we justly reckon those miserable who are deprived of the light of the sun, who grope at noon-day as in the dark, seeking for some to lead them ; and instead of that beauteous prospect which the works of nature afford others, are presented with an universal blank ; how much more deplorable is the condition of those men whose minds are blinded, and their souls overspread with darkness, with ignorance and error, or thick mists of vicious lusts and passions ; who discern not the beauty of holiness, nor see the wonders of God’s laws ; but are blind to their true interest, and sit down in darkness and the shadow of death.

Hence appears the great usefulness and necessity of knowledge and understanding, in religion and matters of a spiritual nature. It is St. Peter’s advice, that we should “add to our faith virtue, and to virtue *knowledge*.” (2 Pet. i. 5.) St. Paul’s prayer for the Philippians is, that “their love may abound more and more in *knowledge*, and in all *judgment*.” He disparages one of the most excellent and illustrious things in all religion, because it was not under the influence and direction of knowledge : “They have a zeal for God, but not according to *knowledge*.” (Rom. x. 2.) And to name no more, our blessed Saviour blames the Samaritans, because “they worshipped they *knew not what*.”

What has been said should excite us to endeavour after this *single eye*, not only as it means in general a sound and impartial judgment, but in that literal sense as it imports a single-mindedness, the having but one ruling principle and affection, and that is, saving our own souls. We should, as far as is possible, reduce

everything to this single point, not to have two masters to serve, and several chief ends to carry on at the same time ; not to have our treasure in two different places, and our happiness placed in contrary things : but fix ourselves immovably upon the attainment of eternal life and happiness, and not suffer anything to come into competition with it.

This is what our Saviour means, when he tells us, that "no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke, ix. 62.) This is the design of those parables, where he compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure hid in a field, to purchase which a man sells all that he has ; and to a pearl of great price, for which the merchant will part with his whole substance. All which recommend to us the single eye ; that one purpose, upon which we ought to fix our minds, and in which all other aims and views should centre. While we keep to this, our whole body will be full of light, our actions will be all of a piece, and have an uniform tendency to bring us to those regions of light and bliss, which are inhabited by holy souls. But if we suffer ourselves to be diverted by anything from this one end, and while we pretend to pursue it, have our eye fixed upon other designs ; our actions will then cross and contradict one another. We shall be in the utmost darkness and confusion, and shall at last inherit the folly of our choice, and have our portion in that kingdom of darkness, where there is nothing but weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ; the sting of guilt, and the remorse of conscience ; the most vexatious shame and reproach ; the most bitter anguish and vexation ; the worm that never dies ; and the fire that cannot be quenched. (DR. IBBOT.)

§ 44. Christ dissuades from excessive Anxiety about the Future. MATTHEW, vi. 24-34 : Do not imagine that your hearts can be equally divided between heaven and earth. *No slave can serve two masters, whose dispositions are contrary : but will either love the one less, and love the other more ; or will adhere to the one, and neglect the other : ye cannot, at the same time, serve God and Mammon.*

[*Mammon* is a Syriac word for *riches* ; which our Lord represents as a *person* whom covetous men had deified.]

25. *Therefore I say unto you, Be not the slave of Mammon, by being anxiously-solicitous about your subsistence in life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor with respect to your body what ye shall put on, when the garments ye now have, are worn-out. Is not life more valuable than food, and the body than raiment?* 26. *Observe the fowls of the air, now flying around you: they neither sow nor reap; nor gather into store-houses; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: are not ye much more valuable than they?*

27. *Which of you can, by his anxiety, add one moment to his life?* 28. *And as for raiment, why are ye anxious about that? Contemplate the lilies of the field: they toil not, as laborious husbandmen: they spin not, as female slaves: 29, and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, the most magnificent of your kings, in all his splendour (1 Kings, x. 18) was not arrayed as one of these lilies.* (HORNE, ii. 85.)

30. *Since, then, God so array the herbage which to-day is in the field, and to-morrow will be cast into the oven; will he not much more array you, O ye distrustful of his providential care?* 31, *(for the heathen earnestly-seek after these temporal things): for your heavenly Father knows that ye need all these things.* 33. *But seek ye first and before all other objects, the spiritual kingdom of God and the righteousness required by him; and all these smaller things, necessary for the support of life, shall be added over and above.* 34. *Be not then anxious about the morrow: the morrow will be anxious about itself: sufficient for the present day, is its own trouble and vexation.*

As no rational man can live without a prudent regard to the future, the precept—*Be not anxious about the morrow*,—relates to those immoderate alarms, which violate our Christian faith in the fatherly providence of God. This application of the precept, we may instance in *three* particulars.

I. This immoderate anxiety relative to the affairs of this world alienates our hearts from God. *No man can serve two masters: ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* Such is the wide and irreconcilable difference in their natures, that to follow one, is to abandon the other. The happiness which God proposes is pure, spiritual, and eternal; the happiness, resulting from the

world, is present, sensual, temporary, and too often procured by ungodly devices.

II. An immoderate concern for the things of the world implies a distrust of God's providence, which is so manifestly exerted in what he does for ourselves or for his other creatures.

Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment? If so, then he who possesses power to give the greater, cannot want ability to impart the less. The being which he has conferred, is a sort of pledge for its maintenance. If Christ be our shepherd, we may, from that relation, expect to be provided with pasture.

Again. It is natural to suppose that God's regard will be extended in a more especial manner, to such of his creatures as are of the most excellent nature. If then the animal life of birds or the vegetable life of flowers, be not unworthy of the divine care, we may infer that his affection will be more intense towards us whom he has created in his own spiritual image, and hath endowed with the faculties of an immortal soul. Are we not of more value than many sparrows? If God so clothe the herbage which to-day is, and to-morrow is fuel for the oven, will he not much more clothe us? In the midst of this varied care which embraces the universe, shall we mistrust, O God, thy paternal love towards ourselves? How can we deem ourselves excluded from that almighty hand which filleth all things living with plenteousness?

III. An inordinate anxiety for the affairs of this world causes us to relapse into heathenism: "After all these things do the *Gentiles seek.*"

And shall it be said that Christians, under their anxieties, have not more resources than the nations plunged in the darkness of ignorance? Well might they complain under the pressure of worldly sorrow. Given up to all the errors of impiety and superstition, they had no just idea of God's providence; and their hopes extended not beyond the narrow boundary of this world: well, therefore, after these things, might the Gentiles seek.

But you (might our Saviour say) you to whom I have revealed the designs of God in all the grandeur of his mercies; you to whom I have promised treasures beyond the power of moth and rust; your minds should be more enlightened. Is it

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the world which absorbs your thoughts? Behold, I present nobler and better objects: direct your chief solicitude to the discharge of those virtues, which prepare the Christian for a better world: *seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*: and all these things shall be added unto you.

If, indeed, we knew the gift of God, and him who speaketh to us, we should find, in communion with Christ, all the graces necessary for our different wants. Pious and Christian souls, we appeal to you: to you, who, firm in the faith of Christ, have never abandoned this anchor of salvation: in all your alarms, is it not true that the sublime principles of our holy religion have been your joy and consolation? Does anxiety assail you? does the burden of the day, does the thought of the morrow, oppress your heart? You remember him who hath said, *Take no thought for your life: the very hairs of your head are all numbered: in patience, possess ye your souls: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*. Your confidence in these Gospel promises composes your agitated soul: it softens your anxious feelings: it embellishes all nature before your eyes: it gives you that contented spirit, which is the greatest of gains: it teaches you both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. You no longer, with unreasonable care, look forward to the morrow. You take no over-anxious thought of all those advancing days, which will soon be swallowed up in oblivion:—you extend your views into eternity.

If, then, such be our folly as rational beings;—if such be our wickedness, as Christians,—by indulging excessive anxiety respecting future events; let us commit ourselves, cheerfully and contentedly, like dutiful sons, to the protection and guidance of that Parent who will not abandon his children. If we sincerely believe his superintending providence, let us live as if we did believe it: industriously, indeed, and warily: but, at the same time, implicitly and resignedly; *casting all our care upon God: for he careth for us*. Let us feel assured, that, in the hour of sickness and privation, in the season of adversity the back will be suited to the burden; and that rays of unexpected hope will cheer the very darkest gloom. While rebellious spirits, by kicking against the goads, make the iron of affliction enter more deeply into their souls; Christian faith will have its perfect work by blunting the arrows of calamity; by creating feel-

ings and dispositions suited to the exigence; and by conciliating all the indulgencies and alleviations of a compassionate God, who beholds our comportment under trial. If we thus possess our souls in patience, we may adopt the language of the Psalmist; "God is our hope and strength; a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge." (STANHOPE, chiefly.)

§ 45. Rash judgment forbidden. MATTHEW, vii. 1-5. LUKE, vi. 37-42. *JUDGE not with rigour, and ye shall not be judged with severity. Condemn not censoriously, and ye shall not be condemned. Forgive offences; and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you: men shall pour into your lap good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with the same measure ye mete withal, it shall be measured back to you.*

Luke, vi. 39. And in order to enforce this considerate and kind disposition, *Jesus spake a parable unto them. Can the blind guide the blind? Will they not both fall into a ditch? If ye are not lenient and charitable in your judgment to others, so far from being my disciples, ye will be the blind leading the blind, and deceive yourselves and followers. What the preceptor is, such generally is the scholar. The disciple is not superior to the teacher: but every one will be complete and perfected as his Master to whom he is attached. How important, therefore, is it, that ye should be accurate teachers and guides, lest the highest attainments of your disciples should leave them short in the true principles of my Gospel.*

Matt. 3. Luke, 41. *And why dost thou look at that little infirmity which is but as a splinter in thy brother's eye; while thou observest not the much greater fault which is like a beam in thine own eye: 4, or how, with what appearance of justice, canst thou say to thy brother, Permit that I may take the splinter out of thine eye, while thou thyself beholdest not the beam in thine own eye? 5. Thou hypocrite! first clear out the beam from thine own eye; and then wilt thou clearly discern how to remove the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

SINCE the welfare of society requires that bad men should be visited by private rebuke and by publick punishment; it is evident that our Saviour's injunction of not judging or condemning is exclusively directed against those rash and hasty judges who condemn the conduct of their neighbour with hasty, groundless, harsh, and unwarrantable censure.

If it were necessary to multiply dissuasives from rash and uncharitable censure, it might be asked, whether our eye is really so penetrating as to discern the secret motives which have actuated the object of our condemnation. We might shew that hasty censure where it blackens reputation, is, in its ultimate effect, as deadly, though cruelly slower than the dagger of the assassin. We might shew that rash censure, though not arising from a malicious intention, yet eventually has all the venom of slander and detraction. We might shew the ingratitude of sporting with the character of those who, perchance, are favourably disposed towards us. We might point out the inhumanity of embittering the distress of him who is sufficiently unhappy for having been guilty; and who, perhaps, has made his peace with God by a sincere repentance: but let us restrict our meditations to the motive suggested in the words, "*Judge not, that ye may not be judged.*" This judgment may be considered as the judgment of men; and the judgment of God.

We should not be censorious of others, as ever we would not be served, by men, in the same kind. They may be faulty, indeed, in making such returns: but it can hardly be expected that, when other men see we make free with their characters, they will not make free with ours. They will even think themselves obliged, in their own defence, to scan our actions more narrowly than they would otherwise do; and very probably, in their turn, be as rash and uncharitable upon us, as we have been upon them. Divine Providence wisely and justly permits it that men who fish for scandal, are very often met with in their own way: and it seems to give a general satisfaction, when they are effectually exposed.

We should avoid censoriousness, if we wish to escape the judgment of God. Without repentance, we may expect him to animadvert severely upon this sin in particular; which, upon many accounts, may be esteemed a very great and heinous sin. It is a direct invasion of God's province; anticipating the work

of the Great Day; on which account St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians (1 Ep. iv. 5), "Judge nothing before the time till the Lord come; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Pretend not to judge of things out of the cognisance of men now, and that are designed to be so till the great Day, as the secrets of the heart: otherwise, you will usurp God's place.

Is not censoriousness a judging men for things wherein they are not accountable to us, but to God only? "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own Master, he standeth or falleth." (Rom. xiv. 4.) "Why dost thou judge or set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." In such matters as St. Paul is speaking of in these passages, every man is to give account of himself to God: but men have no right to call one another to account: therefore, to judge another in these things, is to thrust ourselves into God's province.

We may expect that God will proceed with rigour in judging our offences against him, if we are rigid censors of our neighbours. He will never exceed the measures of justice: but if we allow uncharitableness, we are to expect no mercy: thus St. James declares, that "he that hath shewed no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy." And what then must become of us? If God be strict to mark all our real iniquities, can we stand? Can we answer him for one of a thousand of our actions? The uncharitable are excluded from any hope of the benefit of Gospel-grace.

In endeavouring to guard ourselves against a censorious spirit, let it be a settled resolution with us, to maintain a good opinion of every one, till we are obliged by evidence to surrender it. This is a duty we owe to God and man; and our suspicions, especially our reflections, should never out-run or exceed the discovery which men make of themselves.

Let us often recollect the evils included in censoriousness; that it arrogates divine prerogatives; is a constant act of injustice to our neighbour; and a plain violation of the Golden Rule of doing to others as we would be done unto.

Let us carefully avoid and mortify the usual incentives to a censorious temper. Idleness and want of good employment, often lead people to this vile practice: many set up for judges of

others, because they have nothing else to do. Selfishness and pride are common principles of censoriousness. Men think too highly of themselves, and are strongly tenacious of their own interests; and imagining other people to stand in the way of their reputation or advantage, they know not how to lessen them but by detraction and uncharitable censures.

We should especially think frequently of the number and greatness of our own faults, and our need of allowances both from God and men. If we are not conscious of the same enormous sins as some publicly commit; yet we must be sensible of very many particulars which will not bear a strict scrutiny, but need gracious indulgence from the Blessed God daily. Let us judge ourselves for these, and we shall be very tender in judging others. Let a sense of our continued dependence on divine liberality make us candid and liberal towards our brethren; lest we lose the comfort so justly forfeited; and abused mercies be another day repaid with measures of wrath, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. (EVANS, chiefly.) For the poetical construction of Matthew, vii. 5, see HORNE, ii. 334.

§ 46. Prudence necessary upon Religious Subjects. MATTHEW, vii. 6: *GIVE not that which is holy, unto the dogs, lest they turn again and rend thee; neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet.*

THE expression *pearls*, and *that which is holy*, may in a general application of the words, designate the precious doctrines and rules of religion. In the Rabbinical writers, the precepts of wisdom are termed *pearls*. Of moral advice some men are susceptible; and can endure instruction. Others are impatient of reproof; and all who would speak to them on religious subjects, are considered as officious meddlers, and fit objects of resentment. This latter description of persons are represented by our Blessed Lord, under the emblem of *swine* and of *dogs*: and, in reference to these persons, he urges the necessity and reasonableness of caution, not to throw out the doctrines and rules of religion so promiscuously on every occasion as may expose them to contempt.

The chief *evil* qualities by which dogs and swine are dis-

tinguished, are, 1, *greediness* ; 2, *impudence* ; 3, *uncleanness* ; and *stubborn forwardness*.

1. To a bad man, this world is the great object : he thinks he never can have enough of it : and he is resolved to get it by any manner of means. As one dog will snatch the meat from the mouth of another ; so will he take to himself the property, the prospects, the character, of another man. The prophet (Is. lvi. 11) complains of bad watchmen, under the name of *greedy dogs* which can never have enough ; looking every one for his own *gain* from his quarter. Such men think only how they may get, and have and enjoy ; as the dog when he is hunting, thinks only how he can overtake and devour. How incessant are the labours of some men in this chase, hunting one another ; and snatching whatever they can, from those who are upon the same hunt ! No dog gives anything to another dog : his rule is to have it all to himself : and so little justice and mercy is there among these animals when the devouring principle takes place, that it is not an uncommon accident for one poor beast, to be marked out for a victim ; in which case, the rest fall upon him, and tear him to pieces. In the minds of bad men, distempers are bred, as violent, as unaccountable, and as infectious, as those of canine madness ; and they are as eager as mad dogs, to communicate the madness of wickedness to all who come within their reach.

2. Another quality of the dog is *impudence*. The most ancient of the heathen poets calls one man a *shameless dog*. There is scarcely any property which distinguishes a bad man from a good one, more than his impudence. If an honest man, on the road to evil, is met by any one, he is easily abashed, and his modesty saves him : but an evil man, if confronted and disappointed, begins again : his conscience is seared with a hot iron. He feels no shame ; and as he begins, so he goes on, steadfast and unmovable.

3. There is a third quality, *uncleanness*. For this, the two animals are brought together by St. Peter. Christians are called away, that they may *escape the pollutions of the world* ; but many return to them again, and become as they were before : "it happens unto them," (says the apostle) "according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." These practices are loathsome : but they are no more than a sign of the more

loathsome ways of those people, who forsake the grace of God for the pollutions of the world. Nothing is really unclean in the sight of God but sin ; which defileth the soul and spirit. Demons are called *unclean spirits*, from their wickedness : though in them there can be no such thing as bodily impurity. A soul defiled with sin is as contrary to the nature of God, as a beast wallowing in the mire is hateful and adverse to man ; and a soul returning to a sin which it had forsaken, falls into as loathsome a habit as that of a dog. These are emblems of the men who are grossly dissolute, indecently voluptuous ; whose God is their belly.

4. Another ingredient in the vile temper of bad men is a *stubborn frowardness* and angry resentment. There are some so perverse, so resolute in their sinful courses, that instead of submitting to necessary discipline for reformation, they snarl at admonitions, and would even bite and devour their charitable instructors. "He that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame : and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee."

Our Saviour points out two inconveniences, which may result from want of caution in religious communications.

1. Great and holiest matters may be brought into contempt ; which is implied in *trampling pearls under foot*. "I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me : I held my peace, even from good." Out of compassion towards sinners, let us avoid giving them opportunities to increase their guilt, by renewing their impiety against God ; and to draw down misery upon their heads by doing despite and dishonour to the venerable things, connected with the salvation of the human soul.

2. To propose promiscuously to all men religious instruction, may occasion ill-treatment to ourselves which may impede our usefulness : those, of a canine disposition, will turn again and rend their monitors. As a general assertion, Christianity claims from us the most affectionate zeal for its diffusion, even to the jeopardy and loss of life : but Christ does not require us to precipitate ourselves into indiscreet dangers, and to arouse persecuting rage by ill-timed obtrusion. When the first disciples were persecuted in one city, they were enjoined to flee to another ; not only that they might not throw away their own lives unnecessarily, but that they might seek an opportunity of bestowing their labours, where they might hope for a better reception. The

general rule of St. Paul was, "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Walk in wisdom towards them that are without : " Jewish and heathen infidels, enemies to the truth.

If these evil dispositions do not unfrequently occur even among Christians, the greater caution is necessary, lest they spring-up in ourselves. We cannot cherish, too carefully, an abhorrence of sin. If the pearl of great price become less and less valued in our estimation, it is a sure proof, that the thoughts of worldly indulgence in swinish and vicious pleasures are being familiarized to our minds. Let us, also, beware of a morose impatience under the affectionate admonitions of a friend, as though he had inflicted some grievous injury. Far wiser is it to imitate the excellent spirit of the Psalmist, "Let the righteous smite me : it shall be a kindness : and let him reprove me ; it shall be excellent oil which will not break my head." (ABERNETHY. JONES.)

[For the poetical construction of the words of the text, see HORNE, ii. 467.]

§ 47. Motives and Encouragements to Prayer. MATTHEW, vii. 7-11: *Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and the door shall be opened unto you. 8. For every one that asketh aright and agreeably to God's will, receiveth ; and he that diligently seeketh, findeth ; and to him that patiently and perseveringly knocketh, it shall be opened.*

9. *And indeed what man is there among you, who if his son should ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone ? 10. Or if he ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If, therefore, ye, evil as ye are, know how to give good gifts to your children ; how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those that ask him ?*

To men, helpless and feeble creatures, it is most important to know that prayer is a great link between heaven and earth ; and that by supplications, the strength of God is conciliated in support of our weakness ; and his consolations, in the alleviation of our sorrow. What are some of the encouragements to prayer, and what are some of its necessary qualities ; we are instructed in the words of our Lord, now the subject of our meditation.

I. 1. We are encouraged to prayer by the sacred relation which God condescends to bear towards us. The heathen dreaded his Gods as careless of their worshippers; delighting more in punishing than in rewarding; or bound, by some mysterious compulsion of fate, from attempting to protect their votaries. The disciples of Christ approach their God, not as slaves trembling before a tyrant, but as children, encouraged by a tender parent. Will any man put off his hungry child when asking food, with a useless stone, or with a venomous serpent instead of a fish? If, therefore, men who are corrupt and selfish, and who cannot give to their children without lessening their own store, are yet instructed by natural affection to give salutary and useful gifts to their children; how much more shall our heavenly Father whose goodness and riches are infinite, concede to the prayers of his redeemed children, whatever conduces to the salvation of their souls?

I. 2. A second encouragement to prayer is suggested by considering from *whose* lips this command of asking, seeking, and knocking, has issued: the injunction is that of Jesus, the Son of God. Not only has he enjoined us to pray; not only has he pointed out what are the chief subjects as the groundwork of prayer; but he himself, by virtue of his sacrifice upon the Cross, commends our prayers to the favour and acceptance of God. His declaration is, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." He has bequeathed to us no idle unmeaning assurance, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of you." To the prayers which we utter, he imparts the incense of his merits; and bears them, thus perfumed, to the throne of the Father.

I. 3. Nor, in meditating on this Scripture, let us forget, that the third Person in the Blessed Trinity, is not wanting to us in the encouragement of prayer. Our Saviour, in St. Matthew's record, says (v. 11), "How much more shall your heavenly Father give *good things*" to his petitioners? St. Luke, in the parallel passage (xi. 13) says, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give *the Holy Spirit*?" And what is one office of the Holy Spirit? He is an exciter or director of us in our addresses to God, that he may render them, as to matter, agreeable to the will of God; and as to manner, fervent and affectionate. (Rom. viii. 26.) Such were the promises of God,

by the lips of Zechariah (xii. 10): "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." If then, God the Father invites us, by his very appellation, to approach in prayer; if God the Son presents and commends our prayers; if God the Holy Ghost succours our infirmities in prayer; to abstain from devotional intercourse with God is to trifle with the salvation of our souls.

II. But whatever may be, on the part of God, the encouragements to prayer; it is not every petition to which the Mediator can extend his commendatory influence. He expects to find the duty of prayer distinguished by certain qualities.

II. 1. Care and application form a quality of prayer. *Ask*; as a traveller desirous to know the way; and determined to pursue it. *Ask*; as a man ready to starve, would beg for bread; or a man, sentenced to die, entreats for life. *Seek*: leave no stone unturned: thou hast lost thy God: and there is no peace to thy soul, until thou shalt have found him. Light a candle; sweep diligently, until thou hast found the lost coin, even the favour of God. If we draw near to God with our lips, while our cold hearts are far from him; this is the homage of those who imagine that God will accept a mock representation of prayer. Fervour will attest our earnestness in petitioning, and tend to confine all criminal wandering of thought.

II. 2. *Perseverance* is a necessary quality in prayer. We must not only *ask*, but *knock*. We must beseech importunately; and wrestle with God. Whoever knocks at the gate of divine mercy, as if resolved to gain admission, or to perish knocking; will be sure to succeed. Discontinuance in prayer leads to indolence. In the parable of the unjust Judge, who though insensible to all considerations of religion or humanity, was yet prevailed upon by the unceasing urgency of the widow's solicitations, our Saviour has instructed us that we ought always to pray and not to faint.

II. 3. *Humility* and *submission* to the divine will are necessary qualities of prayer. *Ask*, as a beggar asks alms: throw thyself as a mendicant at the door of mercy. Thou art destitute of all spiritual food: and it is God alone who can bestow it. A sinner, however penitent, will find sufficient reason to be humbled in coming to confess his sins in prayer: and equal diffidence

and humility will he feel in venturing to lay his requests at the throne of God's majesty.

This humility in prayer will repress and subdue the feelings of disappointment which may arise in our minds, when God may seem to have closed his ears against our supplications. Our conscience will ask, Have I urged my petitions in the all-prevailing name of the meritorious Intercessor? Have I firmly resolved to quit the sins, for which I solicit pardon? Have I sought temporal blessings, in preference to the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Have I prayed for what promotes God's glory; or merely gratifies my worldly desires? Have I hastily uttered anything before God? Have I asked what God, in his Word, has never promised? Have I laboured (as the apostle enjoins) to "lift up *holy* hands?" This I know that God heareth not sinners.

Almighty Father, thou knowest our ignorance in asking. Freely bestow, at what time, and in what measure, and by what instrument, thy infinite wisdom and mercy may deem fit. Grant to us all the grace to esteem, in profound humility, that even thy denials are among the choicest of thy mercies. Increase in us, even by thy silence, our earnestness to hold communion with thee in prayer; whether in the silent aspirations of a devout heart; or in the privacy of our closets; or in the bosom of our family; or in the congregation of the faithful: so that asking, we may receive; seeking, we may find; knocking, it may be opened to us; through the merits and mediation of thy blessed Son. Amen.

§ 48. Rule of Equity. MATTHEW, vii. 12: IF your heavenly Father be thus kind to all in granting their reasonable petitions, so ought we to imitate him in affording aid to others. *All things, therefore, which ye would be willing that men should do to you, do ye also, in like manner, to them: for this is a summary of all the social virtues recommended in the moral precepts in the law of Moses, and in the writings of the prophets.*

THIS rule is evidently not to be taken in its most literal acceptation. A magistrate is not authorized to suffer the guilty to meet with that impunity which, in the same criminal situation

he might probably desire to be extended to himself. A benefactor is not bound to comply with the demands of such as ask unmerited favours; though conscious that he himself might be apt to make as extravagant requests, were it his turn to be the object of another man's beneficence. Under proper limitations which exclude all vicious, excessive, and unreasonable requests, the precept may be understood thus: "Put thyself in thy neighbour's stead: and consider impartially what degree of love, good-will, forbearance, and forgiveness, what treatment, what favours, thou mightest, fairly and justly, expect from him: and be thou sure to deal with him according to those thy just and regular expectations." As a legitimate and constituted standard of weight and measure is necessary in commercial traffick; so in the general intercourse of human life, there exists an equal necessity of a perfect weight and measure, by which all men ought to regulate their conduct in acting and suffering, in commanding and obeying, in giving and receiving: and this standard of equity and justice can be no other than the equal and righteous rule, established in the text: Do, in all cases, and towards all persons, even as we would be done unto. Do we desire that others, in all transactions with us, should adhere to integrity and truth? We must abstain from exercising the arts of fraud against them. Have we been surprised into some mistake or inadvertence? Let us think it equitable to extend to others the charitable construction which we desire for ourselves.

In order to enforce the observance of this rule among the different ranks of men, let it be considered, that how wide soever the distance may appear, which birth, fortune, or station, may have made between one person and another; yet that these distinctions are merely adventitious and accidental: that the whole race of mankind are the workmanship of the same hands, formed with the same immortal souls, impressed with the same divine image, and alike related to God, the equal Father of all; and that as all men are by nature thus equal, they are alike subject to every moral obligation, and have all an equal right to the same equitable treatment.

Let it also be further considered, how uncertain is the possession of those distinctions which elevate one person above another. Such is the fluctuation of all human affairs, that

to-morrow's sun may find him eating the bread of affliction, who has hitherto fared sumptuously every day. This uncertainty may furnish a prudential motive, to conduct ourselves with that equity and benevolence to our fellow-creatures in one station of life, which we would desire and expect from them in another. They, therefore, to whom heaven has with a more liberal hand distributed the talents of wisdom, wealth, or power, should be wisely merciful; and employ their wisdom in informing the ignorant; their wealth in relieving the indigent; their power in protecting the injured;—lest themselves should possibly be one day reduced to supplicate in vain that assistance, protection, or relief, which they now refuse to others. This rule of equity is attended with many advantages.

1. It is a rule apt to offer itself to our thoughts, and ready for present use, upon all exigencies and occasions. We can scarce be so far surprised by any immediate necessity of acting, as not to have time for a short recourse to it; room for a sudden glance, as it were, upon it, in our minds, where it rests and sparkles always, like the urim and thummim on the breast of Aaron. There is no occasion for us to go in search of it to the oracles of law, dead or living; to the code or pandects; to the volumes of divines or moralists; we need look no further than ourselves for it: for (to use the apposite expressions of Moses) "this commandment, which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Deut. xxx. 11-14.)

2. It is a precept particularly fitted for practice; as it involves in the very notion of it a motive, stirring us up to do what it enjoins. Other moral maxims propose naked truths to the understanding, which operate often but faintly and slowly on the will and passions of man: but it is the peculiar character of this, that it addresseth itself equally to all these powers; imparts both light and heat to us; and, at the same time that it informs us certainly and clearly what we are to do, excites us

also, in the most tender and moving manner, to the performance of it. We can see our neighbour's misfortune without a sensible degree of concern, which yet we cannot forbear expressing, when we have once made his condition our own, and determined the measure of our obligation towards him, by what we ourselves should in such a case, expect from him. Our duty grows immediately our interest and pleasure by the means of this powerful principle, the seat of which is, in truth, not more in the brain than in the heart of man: it appeals to our very senses, and exerts its secret force in so prevailing a way, that it is even felt as well as understood by us.

3. Another recommendation of this rule is its vast and comprehensive influence: it extends to all ranks and conditions of men, and to all kinds of action and intercourse between them; to matters of charity, generosity, and civility, as well as justice; to negative, no less than positive duties. The ruler and the ruled are alike subject to it. Public communities can no more exempt themselves from its obligation than private persons. And with respect to this extent of it, it is, that our blessed Lord pronounces it to be *the law and the prophets*. His meaning is, that whatever rules of the second table are delivered in the law of Moses, or in the larger comments and explanations of that law, made by the other writers of the Old Testament (here and elsewhere styled the prophets), they are all virtually comprised in this one short significant saying, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*. From this, as from their common source, they were all originally derived; and into this they may be all ultimately resolved. For all the law is fulfilled in one word (saith St. Paul), even in this, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. (Gal. v. 14.) And this word, therefore, the same apostle calls elsewhere, *The end of the commandment* (1 Tim. i. 5), and St. James, *The royal law* (James, ii. 8): a law (they both mean) in which all the lines of duty, relating to our neighbour, centre; and under which, as under one common head and principle, they may be reduced and ranged.

4. This rule is obvious to the meanest and most ignorant men, as well as to those of the greatest parts and improvements. God is, on this, as well as on other accounts, no respecter of persons; having made that which is most necessary, most common; and, consequently, suited this principle, which all men have equal occasion to use, equally to the apprehensions of

all men. They, therefore, who are incapable of long trains in deductions of reason, and of adapting the several rules of morality to the various circumstances of action, are yet able (as able as the acutest philosophers or casuists) to look into their own hearts, to ask themselves this plain question, and to return a clear answer to it: "Would I myself be content, that others should deal thus with me? Why then should I so deal with any man?"

5. Human laws are often so numerous as to escape our memories; so darkly sometimes and inconsistently worded, as to puzzle our understandings; and their original obscurity is not seldom improved by the nice distinction and subtle reasonings of those who profess to clear them; so that they lose much of their force and influence; and, in some cases, raise more disputes than perhaps they determine. But here is a law, attended with none of these inconveniencies; the weakest memories are capable of retaining it; no perplexing comment can easily cloud it; the authority of no man's gloss upon earth can (if we are but sincere) sway us to make a wrong construction of it.

Let us hence not fail to observe the great benignity and goodness of God, who hath made even our own will, and our self-love, a complete law of action and measure of duty to us. *All things whatsoever ye would* (i. e. whatsoever ye are willing) *that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them!* Surely a very easy yoke, and light burden! We may be averse, perhaps, from submitting to the divine will, or to the will of any of our fellow-creatures, exercising authority over us: but can we be otherwise than contented and pleased in submitting to our own will, whatever it is? And yet a submission to that (when regulated by proper circumstances and views) is all that is required of us. Merciful Saviour, thou saidst once indeed to thy Father, as thou wert man, *Not my will, but thine be done*: (Luke, xxii. 42,) but who could expect that thou shouldst have said the same thing to us also, as thou art God! However, thus, in effect, thou hast said in the precept now before us. Teach us, O Lord, by the means of this precept, so duly to regulate our wills, that we may safely follow them. Make thy will ours; that so, in doing our own will, we may be sure to fulfil thine also. (ATTERBURY.)

§ 49. Difficulties of the Christian Vocation. MATTHEW, vii. 13, 14 : Strive to *enter* into the Christian faith *through the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad and spacious is the way which leadeth to destruction : and there are many who by it enter into destruction ; 14, because strait is the gate, and narrow the way which leads to eternal life ; and they who find it, are few.*

OUR Lord is supposed to allude to the breadth of the Jewish roads ; the public ways being sixteen cubits broad ; the private, four.

As narrow roads admit few persons abreast, and much less to enter through a strait, narrow, or wicket gate ; and, on the other hand, as a broad road and widely open gate admit the approach and entrance of very many ; by these figurative expressions our Saviour gives us to understand, how easy it is to enter into destruction ; and how hard to procure our own salvation. At the same time, our Saviour intimates that the generality of mankind tread in the wide paths of error, and follow their passions ; while very few know how to find out the narrow path of truth, and to adhere thereto, notwithstanding all the discouragements and obstacles they meet in their way.

To the Gentile, on embracing Christianity, the gate was indeed strait and narrow. To quit a gorgeous idolatry, and to abandon licentious indulgences which had formed part even of natural religion, this was to pluck out a right eye ; and in the moral world, was as great a miracle, as if, in the physical world, the Ethiopian had changed his skin. But although to those who have been born of Christian parents and are living, from their cradle, under the shade of the Christian Church, the gate, by baptismal consecration, is comparatively wider than when the Baptist first summoned converts ; still there remains a rough and rugged road. Self must be denied ; corruptions, mortified ; temptations, resisted ; duties, performed against inclination ; and often severe tribulations, endured. We have, comparatively speaking, few companions to cheer us on our journey. Many of our fellows have not found the road through inattention of search ; or having discovered it, deliberately pass into the smooth and flowery expanse of the broad road. But without dwelling unnecessarily on the metaphoric language of

our Lord, his instruction is virtually this: Sin is adorned with many ensnaring facilities and pleasures, and is countenanced by numberless votaries. A holy and mortified life has many difficulties; and presents a forbidding aspect. But my disciples, in pursuit of happiness, must not consider the numbers more than the manners of their fellow-travellers; nor with what ease and enjoyment the road is attended; but whether it will conduct them to the desired end, the salvation of an immortal soul.

On considering the difficulties which attend our Christian vocation, it becomes us to consider whether they are not magnified by our own folly. Our Lord in asserting that few *find* the gate of salvation, implies that they entered upon the search, but in an erroneous direction: or in other words, we may deceive ourselves by many illusions; and fancy that we are on the road to heaven, while we are wandering to the right or left in the paths of gross misconception. To have been born in the bosom of the Christian Church is, with some persons, a sufficient ground of hope for admittance into heaven: but "*why*," saith Christ, "*do ye call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?*" Some trust to forms and an external devotion; and forget that though these things ought to be done, justice and mercy must not be left undone. Others are impelled by a false zeal which in their fancied support of the Christian faith sends them in quest of proselytes; but are blind to the duty of Christian benevolence and charity: though they boast of casting out demons in the name of Christ, he acknowledges them not. Some are desirous to enter heaven by the road of compensation: touch not the sore point of their heart; permit them to continue in one or two favourite sins; and, in other respects, Christ will find them docile. There are others who count upon a tardy repentance; and flatter themselves that a few prayers, breathed upon a death-bed, will disarm divine wrath.

We shall not be justified in complaining of the unsuccessful result of our own self-deceptions. At the same time, we are not summoned to an easy task, even when the Cross is taken up in a legitimate frame of mind: but in this case, the warnings of Christ must not be deemed too deterring: for, though he has apprised us of a narrow and rough road, the task imposed is not impossible: we may enter; but we *must strive*.

1. The necessity of striving is founded upon the express

command of our Lawgiver and Judge. He that refuseth, refuseth him who speaketh from heaven; and must pay the penalties of disobedience. Our Saviour declares, "I am the way: no man cometh to the Father, but by me." It is not, therefore, prudent to hesitate. There is no middle path. We cannot quit or decline the narrow road, without moving in the broad path to destruction. We cannot renounce happiness, without incurring misery.

2. Are not our efforts in striving encouraged by the fairest hopes? Whenever we encounter the difficulties of Christian duty instead of hastily exclaiming, "Who is sufficient for these things," let us turn our eyes to the plan of our redemption through Jesus Christ. Has not the Redeemer uttered those gracious words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life?" If it be impossible for us to enter by the strait gate, this mighty work which is the cornerstone of God's dispensations, must be barren and without effect: and all the exhortations of Jesus Christ, all his promises, all his motives, and all his threats, must thereby become a dead unmeaning letter. But instead of cavilling at the duties imposed, why do we not rather emulate the victories of those Christian soldiers whose warfare is accomplished, and who have died in the Lord? They were mortal as we are; they had the same truths to believe, the same duties to practise, the same passions to subdue. But they have rested from their labours, and their works have followed them. If we strive as they, we shall enter as they. We shall participate in their triumphs.

3. The necessity of exertion may be justified and quickened by the nature of the object to which the exertion is directed. The toil of the Christian is for the salvation of his soul. If a perishable wreath encouraged the Grecian athlete to undergo the grievous labour of previous training; and if the prize at the Olympic games was a compensation even for expiring at the goal of victory; why should the Christian consider himself absolved from toil in running the race which is rewarded by the favour of God? Does the Almighty hold out such contemptible rewards? Is the conquest over sin so inglorious, and so little deserving of exertion? Magnanimous minds, even in earthly strife, despise easy victories: why does the Christian refuse to

gird up his loins after so great a prize as admission into the many mansions of his heavenly Father?

Nor let our exertions be repressed by inferring from the language of our Lord, that only a small part of mankind will be saved. Those who enter the way of destruction, may be called *many*; as when we say, 'a great many are sentenced to death,' though they bear a small proportion to the whole population: and those who enter the gate of life, may be called *few*, without reference to their comparative number, merely because they are fewer than might be expected. It follows, however, that there is no absolute decree of God defining the number of the saved, and excluding others from it. All who earnestly and sincerely seek to enter through this gate, will succeed.

Lastly: the necessity of striving is founded even upon that pleasure which inseparably attends upon obedience to God's commands. Tell us, ye more faithful disciples; ye who have remembered your Creator from the days of your youth; will ye not declare, that all the ways of God are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace? While there is no peace to the wicked; while they who walk in the broad road, do but diversify their sufferings; the mind of a Christian is a continual feast. The cross which he bears, becomes lighter to his shoulders, and dearer to his heart. The habit of duty facilitates the practice. Soon will the grace of God, diffused over our souls, make us bear a joyful testimony to the truth of our Saviour's words, "*My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" Let the thought of these divine assistances awaken within us a spirit of firm perseverance. And when we see the broad road crowded with unbelievers, reprobates, hypocrites, and worldlings, all hastening to their own destruction; let us pray that the grace of God may impress our minds with a salutary fear for ourselves. May he enable us to walk, firmly and steadily, in that better path; the commencement of which may be rough to our unpractised feet; but which will ultimately conduct us into everlasting life. Then shall we, doubtless, prefer the most painful way of piety and virtue, though with yet fewer companions than we might reasonably expect, to all those flowery and frequented paths of vice which go down to the chambers of death.

§ 50. False Teachers are known by their Works. MATTHEW, vii. 15-20. LUKE, vi. 43, 45. BEWARE of false teachers in religion *who come to you in the clothing of sheep*, under the forms of humility, innocence, and piety, in order to deceive the simple; *but inwardly they are ravening wolves*, covetously preying upon their flocks. *Ye shall be able to distinguish them by their fruits*; their actions will enable you to penetrate their disguise. *For every tree is known by its own fruit. Do men gather grapes off thorns? or figs off thistles? Even so every good tree produces good fruit; but every corrupt and evil tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit: neither can a corrupt and evil tree produce good fruit.* The actions of religious teachers will be answerable to the habitual disposition of their hearts.

[Matt. vii. 19. This verse is considered to be an interpolation.] *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*

Luke, vi. 44. *A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; wherefore by their fruits, ye shall know them; for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.* In their unguarded moments, not only their fruits and actions, but even their language issuing from the abundance of a corrupt heart, will manifestly convict them of being false teachers.

'A WOLF in sheep's clothing' is a proverb denoting wicked men who make a great profession of religion, and cannot dissemble so well as not to be discovered, by attentive observation of their conduct, or (as our Lord figuratively speaks) of *their fruits*. As we possess not the divine ability of reading the secrets of the human heart, we have no other means of testing public teachers than their actions; which, in Scripture-language, are often termed *fruits*: (Matt. iii. 8; xxi. 43; John, xv. 2, 5; Col. i. 6.) thus judging men by the same practical and rational criterion, which settles the value of a tree. If by *fruits* be designated *doctrines*, our Saviour would be made to give very unnecessary advice: "Beware of false teachers of false doctrines: for, by their false doctrines ye shall distinguish them."

This warning was necessary, generally, for the future; par-

ticularly, for the present : generally, in reference to all impostors who were likely to assume the name of Christ, (Matt. xxiv. 24,) particularly, in reference to the Pharisees, whose influence over the people was very injurious to the reception of the Gospel ; and so exceedingly mischievous to those who had a veneration for them, that our Lord found it necessary often to repeat a similar caution.

The caution which our Saviour suggests, is founded on obvious reason. A man's works are said to be the tongue of his heart. No man, at the same time, is sinner and saint. If therefore, a teacher contradict his lessons by the impurity of his life, there is sufficient ground *to beware* of him. Prudence requires us to institute a careful examination whether doctrines, which have so little influence upon the teacher, be founded upon truth ; and whether the teacher himself be any thing more than a dissembler and hypocrite. The doctrine, if agreeable to the word of Christ, is not to be rejected ; but we must beware lest an iniquitous teacher, by the fascination of external manner, should conciliate too great an indulgence towards his criminality ; and ultimately lessen our abhorrence of the vicious acts which his example may seem to justify or excuse.

This wary conduct is agreeable to the admonition of our Lord : "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat : all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do : but do not ye after their works : for they say, and do not." (Matt. xxiii. 2.) Suitably to this caution, the apostles warned the infant-Church, that false teachers may be discovered by their works ; as being ravenous wolves, not sparing the flock ; counting gain godliness ; lovers of pleasure ; and turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. To such teachers, shewing their hearts by their works, the apostles frequently allude. (Acts, xx. 29 ; Tit. i. 11 ; 1 Tim. vi. 5 ; 2 Tim. iii. 4 ; 2 Pet. ii. 10.)

Though it be unfair to estimate doctrines by the conduct of teachers, yet the conduct of teachers will stimulate inquiry into the doctrines professed : and the greater the discrepance between the two, the falseness of the teacher will be more glaringly visible. Thus, if the characteristic of the Gospel be charity and good-will, what shall be said of the teachers who by the agency of others are their abettors in desolating whole provinces in persecution of supposed heresy ? Or if a preacher in his pulpit

direct the knife of the assassin against a supposed heretic? Or if the Gospel inculcate purity of heart, what shall be said of the teacher, who, as a minister of religion, traverses provinces as a pedlar in indulgences? Thus in the earliest ages of Christianity, there arose (as was predicted) many false Christs and false teachers who inwardly were ravening wolves; embroiling all Christendom; fleecing the flock by a tribute in the name of St. Peter, arrogating religious homage; and pardoning sins by a regulated scale of prices. These positive deeds, this actual conduct, were fruits which must have been produced by corrupt trees, even by false teachers who belied the doctrine of Christ.

But while the anger of God impends over these teachers who hypocritically bely their sacred functions, and are whited sepulchres full of corruption; are disciples and hearers wholly exempt from peril? Christ, by his doctrine, by his example, by his grace, hath watered every tree in the garden of his Church: the axe will be laid to the root of the worthless, it will be hewn down, and cast into the fire. Not to have good fruit, is to have evil. There cannot be an innocent sterility in the invisible tree of the heart.

But what are the most conscientious teachers, if the truth of their credentials depends upon the strict and undeviating morality of their lives? In many things we all offend. A blameless conversation is a test by which no preceptor that has appeared among men, can be fully approved, that great Being excepted, by whom the criterion has been established. Whoever considers with attention the character of our Blessed Lord, will discover that it was, in every respect, absolute and perfect. Our Lord was not only free from every failing, but possessed and practised every imaginable virtue. Our teacher is not a false preceptor, whose conduct must be separated from his instructions; to tread in his steps and to obey his rules, are one and the same road to heaven. If no other argument for our holy faith could be adduced than the immaculate and sinless character of Christ; if to Christ, and to him alone, can be applied the avowal of Pilate, "I find no fault in him;" if, contrary to the corrupt propensities of our fallen nature, the whole tenor of Christ's life was entirely blameless; this wide difference between him and every other person that came into the world, will justify us in ascribing to

him a celestial origin ; in hailing him as a Teacher sent from God ; and in receiving from him, as the promised Messiah, the final revelation of God's redeeming love.

§ 51. Necessity of Obedience. MATTHEW, vii. 21-23 : *Not one who merely saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the future kingdom of heaven ; but he only who performs the will of my heavenly Father. 22. In that day of final judgment, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, have we not taught in thy name ? and in the authority of thy name, performed many miracles ? 23. And then I will plainly declare unto them, I never approved you : depart from me ye who practise iniquity. (Luke, vi. 46.) Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?*

No question can be more important to Christians than of what nature are the hopes of salvation announced in the Gospel. Our Saviour, in the preceding words, cautions his hearers against *two* false pretences ; from which all his true disciples may infer the general necessity of active obedience to the will of their heavenly Father.

One of these false pretences, is the mere profession of Christianity, in saying, *Lord, Lord*. The true meaning of this address implies our embracing the Gospel, and founding upon it our hopes of acceptance. It may appear strange, that any should delude themselves in this manner by not considering the obligation of pleasing God by labouring to keep his commandments : and yet such is the way of innumerable hypocrites. How often do the prophets reprove the ancient Jews for trusting to the observance of sacrifices, new moons, and Sabbaths ! In our Saviour's time, the Pharisees were walking in a similar path ; making their strictness to consist in tithing mint and anise and cumin. Our Lord, therefore, had reason to warn his disciples against such a fatal error into which many, in all past ages, had fallen ; and which he foresaw that many would incur in the days of the apostles, by trusting to a form of godliness, but denying the power of it, and by naming the name of Christ, without departing from all iniquity. But is not this inexcusable dissimulation ? Of those professing Christians, we find a type in the undutiful son who made a great show of reverence for his

father, but neglected to obey his commandments. The most infamous of mankind (as our Lord teaches us), if they sincerely repent and reform their lives, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before those, whose obedience consists in empty promises and professions.

2. The other false pretence is founded upon having possessed many extraordinary gifts. Men, distinguished by spiritual endowments, and eminently useful in the Church, may, perhaps, be led into the opinion, that they are favourites of heaven : ' Have we not, in thy name, done many miracles ? ' Yet even the most extraordinary gifts are unavailing when separated from holiness of life. To speak with the tongues of angels ; to understand all mysteries ; to remove mountains by the energy of faith ; all these attainments are dead, unless quickened by vital charity. Such was the supposition of St. Paul, in his own case : and we have examples in fact. Judas was numbered with the apostles, and had a part in their extraordinary ministry : Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness, was honoured to be a prophet of the Lord. But if prophecy and miracles were designed for the confirmation and diffusion of Christianity, much more ought they to have had a still deeper impression upon the accredited teachers of the Gospel. They, by thus defying the strongest means of conviction that men could have, and by an obstinacy in wickedness, unavoidably expose themselves to a greater degree of condemnation.

In our age of the Church, none can claim the kingdom of heaven by working miracles. But still there is a diversity of stations, and there are different degrees of usefulness, among the members of the Christian Church ; and the minds of those in the higher and popular and more admired spheres of action, may be corrupted into fancying that they have a meritorious claim to the approbation of Christ. But these expectations are groundless, if we consider his express declarations in the text. If the highest offices, the most eminent abilities, and miraculous gifts, will not entitle those who, forgetful of a holy obedience, lay claim to the kingdom of heaven ; much less will our Redeemer vouchsafe an entrance to those whose spiritual gifts are of a far inferior nature and importance.

But while we say unto Christ, *Lord, Lord*, let us remember that this will not secure our entering into his heavenly kingdom.

Whatever be our profession, or whatever be our office in his Church, the most splendid and most honourable of our works will be vain, if we are found workers of iniquity : for our great Master will then disown us as those whom he never approved. Let us not, therefore, buoy ourselves up with vain and groundless hopes of happiness in another world ; and, in the meantime, indulge ourselves in known sins, and live in the constant neglect of our duty to God or man. Do we think to disannul the counsels and revoke the decrees of heaven ; to make Christ himself a liar, and his words void and of none effect ? How then can we expect to go to heaven without doing the will of God ; when Christ himself hath told us in plain terms, that we shall not ? Have we any other way of getting to heaven but by Christ ? No : God himself hath told us, There is no name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Christ. But what ! will he allow us to continue in our sins, and yet save us for all that ? or hath he given us any encouragement or intimation, that we may be happy hereafter, howsoever we live here ? or hath he granted us any such indulgence as his pretended vicar at Rome doth, even for sins past, present, and to come ? No : mistake not ourselves : Christ is so far from this concession, that while he was upon earth, he made it his business to convince men of the danger of sin, and the necessity of holiness, in order to eternal bliss. And therefore let us beware of thinking that he will ever patronize our sins. Let us not feed ourselves with fancies that when we come to stand before his dread tribunal, he will absolve us from our iniquities, whether we have repented of them or not ; or advance us to everlasting glory, whether we have obeyed the will of God or not.

What joy or pleasure could a sinful man find in heaven ? There is no such thing as houses or lands to be got ; no silver or gold to be heaped up. There is no such thing as popular applause to please his fancy ; nor sensual pleasures to delight his flesh. There is nothing but the vision and fruition of the Chiefest Good ; from which he is naturally averse : so that he had rather be running from God than drawing nigh unto him. He wants that right disposition of mind by which alone man is capable of delighting himself in the enjoyment of the Chief Good. For it is not our being where God is, can make us happy : for then all creatures would be happy : since God is

omnipresent. God is with condemned spirits, as well as with the holy: but they, in hell, feel his presence a torment, because their souls have a natural antipathy against his holiness and purity. It is not, therefore, a matter of wonder, that our Saviour asserts, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'

Blessed Jesus, it will then be in vain to fly to thee with the importunity of prayer, and to repeat the most earnest addresses. We would now, while there is yet room for it, fall down before thee; entreating thee to add the teachings of thy Spirit to those of thy word; that we may be effectually engaged to do the will of thy heavenly Father, that we may finally be confessed and owned by thee, and be admitted into the joy of our Lord. (BEVERIDGE. ABERNETHY.)

§ 52. The Similitude of the two Houses, built on different Foundations. MATTHEW, vii. 24-27. LUKE, vi. 47-49. THEREFORE, *whosoever cometh to me, and heareth these my words, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like unto a prudent man who built his house, and digged deep through sand and earth, and placed the foundations upon the rock: and when the rain descended, and the swollen torrents came, and the winds blew, the inundation dashed vehemently against that house, and could not shake it; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.* 26. *But every one who heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto an imprudent man who without a foundation, built his house upon the loose earth: and the rain descended, and the torrents came, and the winds blew, and beat violently upon that house: and it fell immediately: and the fall and disruption of that house was great.*

THIS is our Blessed Saviour's conclusion of his divine Sermon on the Mount. Its connexion with the three preceding verses is marked by the particle *therefore*. Since the expectation of divine favour ought not to be derived from possessing or from exercising spiritual gifts, without a corresponding purity of heart; *therefore*, whoever cherishes these unwarrantable hopes, is not more prudent than the man who, not thinking of winter or

stormy weather, is so charmed with the beauty of a particular situation on a hill, that he builds his house on the loose soil of it. The prudent man knows that, in calm serene weather, any edifice will stand: but that it is the wintry blasts which try the strength of a structure: he, therefore, digs through the loose soil, and builds on the rocky part of the hill; that his house may stand immovable in the midst of hurricanes.

By this similitude, our Lord teaches us, that the bare knowledge of true religion, or the simple hearing of the divinest lessons of morality that ever were delivered by man,—nay, the belief of these instructions, if possible, without the practice of them, is of no importance at all. It is the doing of these precepts of religion alone which can establish a man so steadfastly, that he shall neither be shaken with the temptations, afflictions, and persecutions of the present life, nor by the terrors of the future. Whereas, whosoever heareth and doeth them not, will be overwhelmed and oppressed by the storms of both worlds; oppressed in this life; and utterly overwhelmed in that which is to come.

The similitude adopted by our Lord, derives new beauty from the peculiar nature of the Jewish climate. The rainy seasons are marked with violent inundations, occasioned by torrents descending from the hills, and washing away all houses which are not erected upon a firm foundation. (A. CLARKE. BURDER, *Oriental Customs*, p. 26, ed. 1847.)

The similitude in its figurative sense presents this important truth in two points of view, by contrasting the obedient disciple with the hypocritical formalist. The true and false disciple has, each of them, the purpose of building; or in other words, each of them professes to entertain a hope of acceptance with God. But the mode of building, on one and the same hill, discovers the respective sincerity of the builders, and shews the ultimate result of their respective expectations.

The sincere disciples in digging a foundation for their hopes of heaven, are anxious to do as well as to hear the sayings of their celestial Teacher. Having unreservedly consented to receive Christ as their Prince and Saviour; they make it their constant care to observe all the rules of his religion. They labour to have their tempers conformable to his word. They lean on nothing but the merits of Christ for the conveyance of all spiritual bless-

ings. Such builders have erected their edifice on the firm, solid; and rocky part of the hill.

On the other hand, there are many hypocrites and formalists, who hear but do not. They loudly profess very ardent hopes to enter the many mansions; but they build their hopes upon the loose earth: this mode of building is effected without labour, but it shews the folly of the builder. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some, to their confusion, build on party and give themselves up to the guidance and dictates of those who claim infallibility. Even St. Paul, before his conversion, embarked his salvation upon the reputation of his party, and after the strictest sect of his religion was a Pharisee: this bigotry, in more modern times, is variously imitated. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity; as if that were a sure token of God's favour: they are Ephraims, who say, "I am become rich; I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity within me." (Hos. xii. 8.) Others build upon the external profession of religion, the privileges they enjoy, and the performances they go through in that profession; and the reputation they have thence acquired. They are called Christians; they were baptized; go to Church; hear Christ's word; say their prayers; commit no injury to any one; and if they perish, 'what' (presumptuously they think) 'what must be the final state of many!' This light in which they are walking, is the light of their own fire: this is that, upon which they venture with a great deal of assurance: but it is all sand; too weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

It seems, indeed, to have been all along the prime art and method of the great enemy of our souls, not being able to root the sense of religion out of men's hearts, yet by his sophistries and delusions to defeat the design of it upon their lives; and either by empty notions, or false persuasions, to take them off from the main business of religion which is duty and obedience, by bribing the conscience to rest satisfied with something less. This project is extremely suitable to the corrupt nature of man; whose chief or rather sole quarrel to religion, is the severity of its precepts and the difficulty of their practice. So that though it is as natural for man to desire to be happy as to breathe; yet he had rather lose and miss of happiness, than seek it in the way of holiness.

The comparative prudence of the two builders is forcibly contrasted. The fury of the elements, combined in rain and wind and land-floods, is exerted against the two houses. These are striking emblems of the violence with which we are often assailed by adversity and temptation. Calamities, grievous to be borne, explore the sincerity of our faith in the promises of God. The storm of persecution causes many to fall from their allegiance. Satan, in his attacks, is rapid and impetuous, and like a torrent swollen by rains, easily bears down the mounds which languid virtue and feeble resolutions oppose to his progress.

In this season of peril, either from without or from within, the hopes which are built upon Christ the rock, will remain unshaken. The comforts of the wise and prudent builder will not wither; they will be an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast; they will ward off the terror of death; and guide him in cheerfulness through the dark valley of the grave.

Under the tempest of wind and rain and inundation, how different is the condition of the builder who erected his house upon unstable and shifting sands! His piety not being well grounded, the storm of *temptation* overpowers him. While the hedge of God was around him, he seemed to eschew evil: but if Satan be allowed to sift him, he curses God to his face. As the member of a tranquil Church, he finds religion and his interest to be identified: but when wind and rain assail the battlements of Sion, the formalist seeks what he deems some better shelter, and the professing disciple becomes the unblushing apostate.

The house, erected by this foolish builder, *falls*: and our Saviour subjoins the awful words, *Great is the fall thereof*. Yes: great inexpressibly: for when God takes away the soul, where is the hope of the hypocrite? (Job, xxxii. 8.) It is "as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost." "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand." (Job, viii. 14.) The fall of the soul is irreparable, and without remedy, after this life; because the spring of charity will then be dried up which alone can shelter the soul from the rain of God's justice, stop the floods of his anger, and withstand the wind of his judgment which will carry away the straw and the sand. The house of the foolish builder fell, when he had most need of it, and expected it to be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another. When a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes:

then, when he thought it would have turned into fruition, "it fell; and *great* was the fall of it." It was a great disappointment to the builder; whose shame and loss were great. The higher men's hopes have been, the lower they fall. It is the sorest ruin of all which attends formal professors; as the doom of Capernaum too lamentably but truly testifies. The greatness of the fall appears in the inability to build anew. God indeed can cement the ruins and heal the breaches of an apostate soul; but usually a shipwrecked faith admits of no repair. What may be within the compass of extraordinary grace, is not to be disputed: but as it is arrogance to define and limit the power of grace, so it is the height of spiritual prudence to observe, that the recovery of apostates is not the custom but the prerogative of mercy.

But the general application of Christ's Sermon cannot be improved into a better inference than what our Saviour himself elsewhere suggests; namely, that he who is about to build, would first sit down and consider what it is like to cost him. For building is chargeable; especially if a man lays out his money like a fool. Would a man build for eternity? or, in other words, Would he be saved? Let him consider within himself, at what charges he is willing to be, that he may be willing. Nothing under a universal sincere obedience to all the precepts of the Gospel, can entitle him to the benefits of it; and thus far and deep he must go, if he will lay his foundation true. To substitute good intentions for actual deeds; or to attach merit to performances; to attend the Temples of God with lip-service and listless ears; to boast of exemption from the force of temptation and from the possibility of a fall; to imagine that God will traffick and barter with us by receiving one duty in exchange for the omission of another; ah! thou poor, blind, self-deluding and deluded soul, are these the best evidences thou hast for heaven? these the grounds upon which thou hopest for salvation? Assure thyself that God will deal with thee upon very different terms. God absolutely enjoins thee to do whatsoever Christ has commanded, and to avoid whatsoever he has forbidden. And Christ has commanded thee to be poor in spirit; pure in heart; to mortify thy anger, revenge, and lust; to remove every hindrance, though dear to thee as thine eye; to love thine enemies; and to be perfect, (so far as the poor mea-

tures of humanity will reach) even as thy heavenly Father is perfect. Nothing but a constant, impartial, universal practice of our Lord's sayings can speak peace to thy conscience here, and conciliate him to stand between the wrath of God and thee hereafter. As for all other methods, they are nothing but death and condemnation, dressed up in fair words and false shows; nothing but gins and snares for souls; traps laid by Satan and by such as forward his deadly work. [HENRY. SOUTH.] For the *poetical* construction of the text, see HORNE, ii. 465.

§ 53. Our Lord's Manner of Teaching. MATTHEW, vii. 28, 29: *AND it came to pass that when Jesus had finished this discourse, the people were astonished at his manner of teaching: 29, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*

THE word which in the authorized version, is rendered by *doctrine*, implies, in this passage, the *manner of teaching*. Our Lord's mode of teaching was equally calculated to excite surprise from his engaging suavity and his majestic authority.

While the Rabbins and scribes looked upon the general body of the people as objects of contempt, accursed, and incapable of instruction, our Saviour regarded, with an eye of pity, the helpless and unprotected sheep who were wandering without guide or shepherd. Who more than Jesus, appreciated the value of souls? Who felt more intense pity for their abandoned state? Who, then, was more likely to address his hearers with more tender and winning accents? This engaging manner of teaching is more especially discernible in his Parables. They are simple, natural, familiar, pathetic; abounding, from construction of details, in particulars which, at once, awaken and arrest attention, and descend deeply into the heart. Our Lord did not fatigue his hearers with subtile distinctions, and a series of laborious argument: his precepts are concise, sententious, emphatic; clear to be understood, and easy to be remembered.

One very particular excellence, in our Lord's manner of teaching, is, his custom of drawing instruction from incidents and objects, apparently of casual occurrence. Those who were fishers, he summons to be fishers of men. Among the sheep-

folds, he terms himself the Good Shepherd. The well of Samaria is the type of living water. The mention of manna introduces an allusion to spiritual food. Among *vines*, he speaks of his disciples as branches incorporated in him. In opening the eyes of the blind, he terms himself the *Light* of the world. Our Saviour preached as it were to the eye, as well as to the ear. Instruction thus descended into the minds of his hearers, as rain into a fleece of wool. Their intellect was not strained. The Master had not a proud forbidding aspect. Comprehensive lessons were stored up as materials for meditation: so that disciples seemed as it were beguiled into becoming Preceptors to themselves.

It may further be observed that our Saviour's method of instruction was, on many occasions, by symbolical actions, which are often more impressive than words; or at least, enforce them. He breathes on his apostles, in intimation of their receiving the Holy Spirit. He calls before his apostles, when contending for supremacy, a little child, as the emblem of unambitious and worldly desires. He washes the feet of his disciples, in order to inculcate the grace of humility.

But our Lord's manner of teaching, though mild, winning, and conciliatory, was not, on all proper occasions, devoid of majesty and dignity: *he taught as one who had authority*. He could speak as a divinely-commissioned Teacher: he could enjoin, as the Son of God.

The scribes, as authorized Teachers, were invested with all the influence, which the Chief Priests and elders were able to confer: but the authority which Jesus claimed, was of a far higher description. He did not base his doctrines upon the opinions of the Rabbis and Masters of Tradition. On the contrary, he exposed, in several instances, their false glosses in the interpretation of the Mosaic Law, and zealously controverted their decisions. To what had been said *by those of old time*, he opposes his own determinations in a manner which plainly shewed, that he taught as having an authority superior to that of the scribes.

The expression—*Jesus taught with authority*—may allude to the gravity and dignity, with which he subjected the soul of his hearers: whereas the scribes taught in a formal, lifeless, puerile way, which was not able to over-awe. They generally contented

themselves with quoting the name and authority of some celebrated Doctor; and that, frequently to confirm some trifling remark or useless ceremony of human device. If we may judge of the teaching of the scribes in Christ's days, by the Jewish Talmuds or even by their Misna; their frigid and insipid comments and lessons could no more be compared with those strains of divine eloquence with which our Lord's discourses abounded, than a glow-worm can be compared to the sun. We have reason to believe, that our Saviour possessed an extraordinary energy in delivering divine truths, not merely beyond the scribes, but beyond all men. It was the confession of the officers of the chief priests, *Never man spake like this man*. If the written word is "quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" what greater effect must have resulted from the tone of our Saviour's voice, and from the dignity of his manner! Many of his hearers might have said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Our Lord, even at this precise period of delivering the Sermon on the Mount, had appeared in a far higher character, than that of any preceding Teacher. Symeon had hailed him as the glory of Israel. The Magi had worshipped him as the expected Monarch. His harbinger had announced him as the Lamb of God who taketh away all sin. In his conference with Nicodemus, our Lord had disclosed his divine nature. In his preaching at Nazareth, he had claimed the office of the Messiah. In addressing his present hearers (Matt. vii. 23), he speaks as the eternal Judge, before whom men should beg and plead for their very lives. Who would not be astonished at the authority of a Teacher, before whom he will hereafter be arraigned as his arbiter supreme?

Hence there arose, in our Saviour's teaching, an unparalleled dignity of his divine nature in conjunction with the greatest plainness and simplicity. He employed not those arts which mortal orators adopt to captivate their audience: he lays the most important doctrines and precepts, clearly and plainly, before the people; as having a *right* to demand their attention and obedience. There is a calm composed majesty as well as condescension, a certain air of unaffected greatness which reigns through his discourses; whereby they are distinguished from

those of other teachers, and even from those of the apostles themselves. He speaks of the greatest things with a noble simplicity; of God as his Father whom he well knew; of heaven, as a place he was well acquainted with; of things of the most amazing nature and importance, as if they were noway strange to him.

But in speaking of the *authority* which gave force to the words of Christ, let us remember that it derived no small portion of its energy from the Teacher's exemplification of his own precepts. The lessons of the ancient philosophers were weakened by the profligacy of the preceptors: 'Thou that sayest, A man should not commit adultery, dost *thou* commit adultery?' The very purest mortal has some stain: and even Moses, the *meekest* of men, opened his lips in hasty remonstrance. The authority of an Instructor is altogether destroyed, when he "recks not his own reed:" how can a precept be important when its author, in his moral conduct, violates it? But in reference to Christ, whether we obey his precepts or follow his example, we equally advance to heaven: so that his *authority* as a Teacher derives new impulse and sanction from his realizing, in himself, his own directions.

And was this authority of Jesus falsely assumed? Let Nicodemus reply: "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." Notwithstanding the prejudices which some entertained on account of our Lord's seeming meanness in outward condition and circumstances, and his not affecting the grandeur of the expected Messiah; yet at the Passover, "many had believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." (John, ii. 23.) Already had his fame gone "throughout all Syria:" he had healed "all sick people" (Matt. iv. 24): so that among the *multitudes* who were now assembled (Matt. iv. 25), numerous must have been the hearers who were *astonished with an authority*, far beyond that of the scribes.

This authority of Christ, as the Teacher of the human race, must operate with more than double force upon us to whom it has been given, beyond his hearers at the Mount, to contemplate his more lengthened ministry; and to weigh all the evidences of divinity by which his Church was subsequently established.

This peculiar force, connected with the Evangelical dispensation, is often impressed upon us, in the New Testament. (Hebrews, i. 1-3; ii. 2, 3.) The grandeur and authority of our Lord should induce us to receive, with profound reverence, the doctrines which he taught, the promises vouchsafed, the threats denounced. If we profess to believe in him, let us take care that our faith be not a speculative assent; but such a practical vital persuasion, as may prove our conviction of his great purpose in coming into the world,—to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. (LELAND, chiefly.)

§ 54. Sublimity and Purity of our Saviour's Doctrines and Precepts. MATTHEW, vii. 28: *AND it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.*

THE word *doctrine*, in this passage, denotes our Saviour's *manner of teaching*: but the word is also applicable to the *peculiarity of his moral instruction*: the wide difference between these and the discourses of the Jewish preceptors, afforded to the people ample cause for astonishment. The hearers of Christ were not exempted from laborious virtue by observing one commandment to the neglect of another; but were taught to regard *all* God's commandments with due reverence. Murder and adultery were no longer crimes, except in actual commission: angry language and impure desires were to be repressed, as the guilty causes of the crimes. Marriage was no longer to be dissolved by mere caprice; the only excuse for divorce was a wife's infidelity. While the Pharisees permitted a great variety of oaths, the language of Christ was 'Swear not at all.' His hearers were admonished to discard the lesson which excluded an enemy from just allowance. In their fasts, in their alms, in their devotions, they were forbidden to imitate the vanity and ostentation of their former teachers, but to cultivate humility, and to expect their rewards not from the applause of spectators, but from a God who, though seeing in secret, would reward them openly. Our Lord's hearers on the Mount were not taught things of a mean and trifling nature. Christ did not, like the

heathen philosophers, entertain his hearers with dry metaphysical discourses ; nor did he, like the Jewish Rabbis, content himself with dealing out ceremonies and traditions, with discoursing on mint and cumin, and estimating the breadth of a phylactery. His hearers were not instructed in the nature of disputes between the schools of Hillel and Shammai ; or what this or that celebrated Rabbi said and decided upon such or such a point : his instructions tended to make them wiser and better ; to purify their hearts and to reform their lives. Not one 'saying' dropped from the lips of this new Instructor, which was not calculated to excite the 'astonishment of the people.'

But to us, who, in the present age of the Church, meditate upon the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, is there less cause of astonishment than to our Lord's immediate hearers ? Every serious enquirer after religious truth will find in the Sacred Scriptures an internal evidence for the confirmation of belief in the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

There is nowhere to be found such important information, and such just and noble sentiments, concerning God and religion, as in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

They teach us, in the first place, that there is one Almighty Being, who created all things, of infinite power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness ; that He is the governor and preserver of this world, which He has made ; that his providential care is over all his works ; and that He more particularly regards the affairs and conduct of men. They teach us, that we are to worship this great Being in spirit and in truth : and that the love of Him is the first and great commandment, the source and spring of all virtue. They teach us more particularly how to pray to Him, and for that purpose supply us with a form of prayer, called the Lord's Prayer, " which is a model of calm and rational devotion ; and which, for its conciseness, its clearness, its suitability to every condition, and for the weight, solemnity, and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival." (PALCY.) They teach us, moreover, what we all feel to be true, that the human heart is weak and corrupt ; that man is fallen from his original innocence ; that he is restored, however, to the favour of God, and the capacity of happiness, by the death and mediation and atonement of CHRIST, who is the way, the truth,

and the life ; and that he will be assisted in his sincere, though imperfect, endeavours after holiness, by the influence of God's Holy Spirit.

They assure us, in fine, that the soul does not perish with the body, but shall pass, after death, into another world : that all mankind shall rise from the grave, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ : who shall reward the virtuous, and punish the wicked, in a future and eternal state of existence, according to their deserts.

These are great, and interesting, and momentous truths, either wholly unknown, or but very imperfectly known, to the world before ; and they render the meanest peasant in this country better acquainted with the nature of the Supreme Being, and the relation in which we stand to Him, than were any of the greatest sages of ancient times.

Equally excellent, and superior to all other rules of life, are the moral precepts of the Gospel.

Our divine Master, in the first place, laid down two great leading principles for our conduct, love to God, and love to mankind : and thence deduced (as occasions offered and incidents occurred, which gave peculiar force and energy to his instructions) all the principal duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

With respect to God, we are commanded to love, fear, worship, and obey Him ; to set Him always before us ; to do all things to his glory ; to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness : to resign ourselves wholly to his pleasure ; and submit, with patience, cheerfulness, and resignation, to every thing He sees fit to bring upon us.

With regard to our neighbour, we are to exercise towards him the duties of charity, justice, equity, and truth ; we are to love him as ourselves, and to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us ; a most admirable rule, which comprehends the sum and substance of all social virtue, and which no man can mistake.

As to those duties which concern ourselves, we are commanded to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to be temperate in all things, to keep under our body, and bring it into subjection, to preserve an absolute command over all our

passions ; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

These are the general directions given for our conduct in the various situations and relations of life. More particular injunctions are given in various parts of Scripture, especially in our Saviour's admirable sermon on the Mount, where we find a multitude of most excellent rules of life,—short, sententious, solemn, and important, full of wisdom and dignity, yet intelligible and clear. But the principal excellence of the Gospel morality, and that which gives it an infinite superiority over all other moral instructions, is this ; that it prefers a meek, yielding, complying, forgiving temper, to that violent, overbearing, inflexible, imperious disposition, which prevails so much in the world ; that it regulates, not merely our actions, but our affections and our inclinations : and places the check of licentiousness exactly where it ought to be, that is, on the heart : that it forbids us to covet the praise of men in our devotions, our alms, and all our other virtues : that it gives leading rules and principles for all the relative duties of life ; of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Christian teachers and their disciples : of governors and subjects : that it commands us to be, as it were, lights in the world, and examples of good to all ; to injure no man, but to bear injuries patiently ; never to seek revenge, but to return good for evil ; to love our very enemies, and to forgive others as we hope to be forgiven ; to raise our thoughts and views above the present life, and to fix our affections principally on that which is to come.

But besides all this, the *manner* in which our Lord delivered all his doctrines and all his precepts ; the concise, sententious, solemn, weighty maxims into which he generally compressed them ; the easy, familiar, natural, pathetic parables in which he sometimes clothed them ; that divine authority, and those awful sanctions with which he enforced them ; these circumstances give a weight, and dignity, and importance to the precepts of Holy Writ, which no other moral rules can boast.

If now we ask, as it is very natural to ask, who that extraordinary person could be, that was the author of such uncommonly excellent morality as this ? the answer is, that he was, to all outward appearances, the reputed son of a carpenter,

living with his father and mother in a remote and obscure corner of the world, until the time that he assumed his public character. "Whence, then, had this man these things, and what wisdom is this that was given unto him?" He had evidently none of the usual means or opportunities of cultivating his understanding, or improving his mind. He was born in a low and indigent condition, without education, without learning, without any ancient stores from whence to draw his wisdom and morality, that were at all likely to fall into his hands. You may, perhaps, in some of the Greek or Roman writers, pick out a few of his precepts, or something like them. But what does this avail? Those writers he had never read. He had never studied at Athens or at Rome; he had no knowledge of orators or philosophers. He understood, probably, no language but his own; and had nothing to give him juster notions of virtue and religion, than the rest of his countrymen and persons in his humble rank of life usually have. His fellow-labourers in this undertaking, the persons who assisted him during his life, and into whose hands his religion came after his death, were a few fishermen on the Lake of Tiberias, as unlearned and uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Is it possible, then, that such men as these could, without any assistance whatever, produce such perfect and incomparable rules of life as those of the Gospel; so greatly superior in purity, solidity, perspicuity, and universal usefulness, to all the moral lessons of all the philosophers upon earth put together? Every man of common sense must see that this is absolutely impossible; and that there is no other conceivable way of accounting for this, than by admitting what these persons constantly affirmed, that their doctrines and their precepts came from the fountain of all perfection; that is, from God himself. (BISHOP PORTEUS.)

A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

UPON

**OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS
TO HIS DISCIPLES.**

“ Our Lord's Sermon (which he concluded by the Prayer recorded in the *seventeenth* chapter,) is one of the most excellent that can be conceived. His Sermon on the *Mount* shews men what they should *do*, so as to please God : this Sermon shews them *how* they are to do the things prescribed in the other. In the Sermon on the *Mount*, the reader sees a *strict morality* which he fears he shall never be able to perform: in *this*, he sees all things are possible to him who believes : for that very God who made him, shall dwell in his heart, and enable him to do all that he pleases to employ him in.”—A. CLARKE.

A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

UPON

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

§ 1. OUR Lord having completed his public ministry as a Teacher of his countrymen, is represented by St. John (chapters xiii.-xvi.) as henceforth devoting himself to the especial instruction of his immediate disciples. The announcement of his departure (xiii. 33) had plunged them into the deepest affliction : their indulgent Master now proceeds to sustain them with the most powerful consolation. He assures them that faith in God as their heavenly Father, and faith in him as the promised Messiah, would prove an effectual support under their grief and troubles.—JOHN, xiv. 1.

LET *not your heart be troubled* by my announcing approaching dangers : *believe steadfastly in God*, the guardian of his true servants ; and *believe also in me*, his Son, the Mediator, the Messiah, the Saviour ; and this faith will sustain you.

ARE these words of comfort confined to our Lord's immediate hearers ? or is not this conjoint faith in God and Christ a source of comfort, in all ages of the Church ? Our hearts will indeed be troubled, if our faith be deficient in these respects.

Not to believe in God, is to convert ourselves into our own bitterest enemies. As the principles of the Atheist naturally tend to weaken his moral obligations to others ; he may suspect his own friends, his own parents, his own children, his own wife ; since all of these may have some interest or prejudice, directly opposite to his own. In prosperity, he must endeavour, by

stupifying himself in sensual pleasures, to lose the horrors of an utter extinction in the grave. All his successes must be joyless : since the true seasoning of worldly happiness, is to elevate an eye of gratitude towards an almighty and gracious Benefactor. But in the season of adversity, how black must be the storm to those who, in the language of St. Paul, are 'without God in the world.' Such a man is left to struggle, alone and cheerless, with his miseries ; he has nothing to expect from a sovereign wisdom, a sovereign power, and a sovereign goodness. He has risked all, even eternity ; and that for pleasures, always transitory, and often hurtful. Even if no God exist, even then the believer would have been the happier man, ennobled by the grandeur of his persuasions : he can never be void of consolation : he acquires many an inward grace, by trusting upon the mercies of a chastising Father. But if there be a God ; then inexpressibly wretched must it be, to be arraigned before a Judge, whose existence we had denied ; whose laws we had violated ; whose name we had blasphemed.

II. The pages of Revelation have extended our belief beyond God as Creator of the universe ; our faith in him is augmented, quickened, and exalted, by believing in God the Son. To deny the divinity of Christ, is to pervert in a wondrous manner, innumerable declarations of Holy Writ. To degrade the language of Scripture so as to assert that Jesus of Nazareth is a being of the same humble nature as ourselves ; this is to deprive ourselves of whatever is consoling and encouraging in the nature of God the Father. An ancient heathen is in a far better state than a modern infidel. The Gentile, of old, might pray for and expect the assistance of his God ; but by making Christ a mere man, we thereby stand excluded from the covenant of mercy. The ransom for our sins derived its efficacy from the divine nature of the vicarious sufferer : so that God, if a mere man had been crucified, would still remain clothed in all the terrors of vengeance : he would still contemplate us in no other light than as vessels of wrath. A God, without Christ as God, would be a judge without compassion ; an enemy without reconciliation ; a fire, devouring on all sides. But by believing in the divinity of Jesus, the angry Master becomes the pitying Father. There is then a God who created us ; and a God who redeemed us. There is a God to whom we must go for pardon ; there is a God

who enables us to go, and procures for us a favourable access. Well, therefore, does St. Paul say, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.' For it is in his spotless and divine Son that God unfolds his mercies : nor is he the God of all comfort, but as he has been pacified by the oblation of a victim, whose dignity is commensurate with his own.

This faith is thus bequeathed to us as an anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast, under all the storms of anguish, sorrow, and trouble. While the Church is militant on earth, we cannot expect to be exempted from troubles. These will often arise on account of our trials, perils, temptations, and sins ; and because of the apostasies and iniquities which we witness : but being permitted to rest upon the encouragements of our Lord, we should watch against dejection, and that inward prevalence of dismay and disquietude, which tends to excite murmurs and distrusts, and unfits us for present duty. The vigorous exercise of faith in the promises and perfections of our reconciled God, and in the merits and grace of our heavenly Advocate, forms the proper and adequate method of keeping trouble from occupying our hearts, and of producing inward joy in the midst of tribulation.

In this holy joy, they have no share, whose belief in God the Father as their Creator, and in God the Son as their Redeemer, is merely nominal ; and who, in fact, are practical atheists. These believers are described by the apostle as " professing to *know* God, but denying him in *works*." (Tit. i. 16.) On the other hand, by removing all idols from our hearts, and by making our Christian conduct the interpreter of our Christian creed, we shall the more largely experience the divine guidance in our doubts, pardon in our failures, protection in danger, and consolation in our seasons of *trouble*.

§ 2. Our Lord consoles his disciples, on the eve of his departure from them, by the assurances of future happiness. JOHN, xiv. 2.

Look forward to the heavenly world : we shall be separated only for a time. *In my Father's house are many mansions*, spacious and ample enough for the reception of all disciples, however numerous. Am I, your tender friend and master,

capable of deceiving you with false hopes? *If it were not so, I would have expressly told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. 3. And when I shall have departed and prepared a place for you, I will return to you in the final day of judgment, and receive you unto myself in glory, that where I am, ye also may be.*

LET us observe with what a holy familiarity our Lord speaks of the regions of glory; not as his servants the apostles, who, when describing the heavenly state, seem to labour for words, and to be dazzled and oppressed with the weight of the subject. But Christ speaks of it with an accustomed ease and freedom: just as a prince who had been educated in a splendid court, would speak, with ease, of many magnificent things; at the sudden view of which a peasant would be swallowed up in astonishment; and would find himself greatly embarrassed in an attempt to explain them to his equals at home. (DODDRIDGE.)

The mention of the many mansions was, primarily, intended to soften the natural grief of the apostles, on the departure of a gracious Master, a tender Friend, a beloved Instructor. The words figuratively imply the happiness of heaven under several distinct ideas.

1. If the mansions be *many*, *many must be the inhabitants*. How grand is this idea! How well adapted to the infinite mercy of God! We adore his stupendous power in that multitude of luminous bodies which spangle the firmament: but our hearts are touched with livelier feelings when we think that his bounty, through and in his Son, is anxious to bring to spiritual happiness a still greater number of intelligent beings. This idea is not less adapted to the immense charity of our Redeemer. Is it for some few individuals that the Son of God quitted the abodes of glory, and came to offer on the cross his expiatory sacrifice? "I beheld; and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb." At the birth of Jesus, the middle wall of partition was broken down.

2. The expression *many mansions* represents to us *that order*, which distinguishes the inmates of that heavenly house, and establishes among them *degrees of glory*. Thus the Scripture speaks to us of different ranks among those celestial spirits, on whom God hath poured a more or less abundant measure of his

grace, in employing them on different ministries. It is a natural and delightful thought, that the first places will be assigned to those who have borne the heat and burden of the day; who have sustained the rudest trials; who have gained, by grace, the most brilliant victories over evil passions; who have dragged on a wretched existence in privation, disgrace, and suffering, with patient expectation of that last great day; when to every man, according to his Christian efforts, will be assigned a higher or lower mansion in the house of one common Father.

3. As these *many mansions* are in a *Father's house*, we shall meet *as brethren*. We need not, therefore, fear those rivalities and jealousies, which spring-up on earth among men, soured by envious passions, and disunited by conflicting interests. A sacred harmony, a perfect union, exist among those who have been brought into one salvation by one common Saviour. The mansions may be many: but it is the same house which collects them within its spacious circle, and which forms them into one great family. It is the same spirit of charity which renders them happy in themselves and in each other. All are Christ's: and Christ is God's; and God is all in all.

4. This happiness which our Saviour promises, is not like the enjoyments of earth, embittered by the thought of its approaching termination: the word *mansion* denotes a *fixed habitation*, a state of settled and continued repose. Here we have no abiding city. We have nothing which does not quit us; or which we must not quit. We traverse this lower world as pilgrims and strangers: but on high, the Christian finds a mansion; an abiding place; a city built upon a rock; a palace which cannot be shaken; its founder eternal, its structure immortal.

Thus may our burden of sorrow be alleviated by the hope of admission into that Father's house, whose many mansions are more than capable of receiving all true believers; and whither an ascended Saviour has gone before to prepare a place for us. In the mean time, let us carefully adopt all appointed means of grace in keeping our souls in communion with God; waiting in the patience of hope and in the obedience of love, until Christ, according to his promise, shall return to take us unto himself, that where he is, we may be also. (STANHOPE.)

§ 3. Sincerity of our Lord, in promising future happiness.
JOHN, xiv., part of second verse.

If it were not so, I would have told you.

THESE words bear strong testimony to the honour of the Christian religion, and its divine Author.

Our Blessed Lord saw distinctly his own approaching death, and the grievous sufferings which would oppress his disciples. He animates their courage with the assurance of future happiness. Upon this assurance, they were to repose implicit confidence, as given to them by their divine Teacher ; who, *if it were not so, would have told them.*

We have here, from the lips of Christ himself, an express disavowal of religious fraud or imposture : and that, in a point, where wise men have thought themselves under an obligation to assert as true and certain, what they themselves considered as false ; or, at least, improbable. For what (say they) is so beneficial, as the persuasion of a future happiness, as a reward for present virtue ; and as a consolation, when the comforts of life have vanished ?

But our Blessed Lord governed himself by other principles. He knew that the real interests of mankind are best promoted by veracity. He knew who it was that had been a *liar*, and therefore, a *man-slayer from the beginning* (John, viii. 44) ; and he left it to the adversary of God and man, to signalize himself by murderous deceit and imposture. For himself, he tells his disciples, that he would not permit them to continue under a false (if it had been false) though flattering persuasion. “ In my Father’s house are many mansions : *if it were not so, I would have told you.*”

And can we doubt our Lord’s sincerity in this declaration, when he was now to make an experiment of its truth ; and the deception, if it were one, was first to operate on himself, before it affected others ? A speculative reasoner, or a politic legislator, when planning his system at his ease, and in no danger of being called upon to make trial of his own principles, might discourse with much complacency, though with little inward belief, of a happy futurity. But for one, who was just stepping into that world, of which he announced such wonders ; who was going, by one confident venture, to put his doctrine to the proof, and to

expire in torments from a view to his own promises ; for one, thus circumstanced, knowingly to delude himself and others, is not in human nature, unless perverted by such a degree of weakness or vanity, as no man will think chargeable on the character of Jesus. Socrates, the ablest and honestest of the ancient sages, had reasoned himself into a favourable opinion of the soul's immortality. Yet, when he had taken the fatal cup into his hand, he leaves his followers in the utmost uncertainty on this momentous topic : a conduct becoming a wise man, who had not the most convincing evidence of its reality.

But all suspicion is refuted by considering our Lord's personal character ; which was that of goodness and philanthropy itself. We see this character in all he said or did to his disciples whom he calls his *friends*, and treats as such on all occasions : witness his condescension to their infirmities ; his concern for their safety (while it might consist with their duty) ; his compassion for their sufferings ; his friendliness of temper ; his affection for them "even unto the end." The sympathetic tenderness of his nature was evidenced in all ways, in which it could possibly shew itself, even by that of tears.

But for this declaration, "*If it were not so, I would have told you,*" it might be thought, that Jesus, pushed on by an eager ambition of being the founder of a sect, had, for his own ends, preached up the alluring doctrine of a future state ; or that, heated by a moral enthusiasm, he had overlooked the mischiefs of his scheme, in contemplation of the public ends it might serve, in promoting the interests of religion. But it appears that our Lord was cool enough to see the iniquity of all religious deception ; and just enough to acknowledge the cruelty of it. He felt, in his own case, what it was to encounter death for the sake of conscience ; and he knew what deaths others were to encounter on the like grounds of persuasion. But for "the joy that was set before him," how could the shame and agony of that Cross be endured ? And if there be no recompense of reward, should he expose to such sufferings his unsuspecting and affectionate followers ? The instant moment, the foreseen event, the upright mind, the feeling heart, all conspire to satisfy us, that Jesus could not be the insensible, the unrelenting, the merciless inventor of a politic fable, but a teacher of truth and righteousness sent from God.

Assured, therefore, as we are, that our Saviour taught this doctrine of immortality and future happiness, without the least mixture of guile or dissimulation, let us hold fast our expectation of it to the end: and in all the troubles of this life, endured for conscience-sake, let us reckon with certainty on our title to one of those eternal mansions, of which there are so many in the house of our heavenly Father; and that, for the sake and through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; the author of our salvation, as well as the proclaimer of it; our merciful Redeemer, and infallible Instructor. (BISHOP HURD.)

§ 4. Our Lord explicitly states whither he was going; and by what means his disciples might follow. JOHN, xiv. 4-7.

AND after my former instructions, *ye* cannot but *know* the place *whither I am going, and the way* by which *ye* must follow, *ye know*.

5. *Thomas* (cherishing the expectation of a temporal Messiah, and supposing that Jesus intended to retire for a time before he assumed his sovereignty) *saith unto him, 'Lord, we know not whither thou art going: how then can we know the way?'* 6. *Jesus saith unto him, 'I have already intimated that I am going to the Father; into whose presence I myself am the Way by my example, doctrine, and sacrifice; and I am the Truth in destroying false religions, in fulfilling the promises of God, in being the substance of your legal types, and the completion of prophecy; and I am the Life in quickening dead sinners, and in being the author of an eternal existence: no man, therefore, can come to the mansions of the Father but by me.* 7. *If, therefore, ye had known me aright as the Messiah, ye would have known my Father also: and henceforth ye shall know him and see him by my death, resurrection, ascension, and descent of the Holy Spirit.*

V. 6: Part 1. "*I am THE WAY: no man cometh to the Father, but by me.*"

Our Saviour, in styling himself *THE WAY*, describes by a very just and natural image, our true condition: since, in this world, every human being is a traveller. The Christian travels from grace to glory: the sinner travels, from being born in a

corrupt nature, to precipitate himself into an abyss of misery. That we are all occupied in treading one of these paths, is a fearful thought, and which ought to influence us with a salutary alarm. All of us are in the road to happiness or misery : all of us are ascending to the God of heaven, or are descending to the abodes of evil spirits. But how shall blind and wretched travellers know their true country ; and be assured that they are advancing in the road which conducts them to a blessed conclusion ? The assurance of Jesus rescues us from this afflicting apprehension ; *I am THE WAY*. A road forms the communication between the place whence we set out, and the place whither we tend : Christ is that mystic ladder ; the one extremity of which is fixed on earth, while the other reaches the sky.

Our Lord is not merely *the Way*, as he goes before his disciples as an example ; or merely as a prophet, pointing out, by his doctrine, the way of salvation ; but it is Christ who has removed the obstacles which, on the part of God, impeded our reunion with him. These obstacles were God's immutable justice, and the state of sin in which mankind were plunged. God is necessarily just : and we were exposed to punishment. God is the sovereign magistrate of the world ; and we were the violators of his moral order. It seems, indeed, to have been the natural feeling of mankind, that sinful man must contrive some method of satisfying the outraged majesty of heaven. God himself has confirmed that idea by the numerous sacrifices which he enjoined for the observance of the Israelites. And yet what suitable proportion can exist between the blood of victims and the grandeur of the Supreme Being ? In vain did we attempt to cleanse ourselves by the ablution of lustral waters. At length, in the fulness of time, what the efforts of reason, the precepts of philosophy, and even the Law of Moses could not effect,—that has been wrought by the ministry of Christ. *No man cometh unto the Father but by him.*

Upon this momentous point, the Gospel affords the fullest variety of instruction. Our Mediator has really satisfied for us : he has really merited our reconciliation. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." When we were enemies, "we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son." We are further

instructed, that it is Jesus *alone* who has presented this satisfaction. "He trod the wine-press alone: of the people, there was none with him: he looked; and there was none to help: therefore his own arm brought salvation." (Isa. lxxiii.) St. Paul preaches the same doctrine: Rom. v. 18: "By the righteousness of *one*, the free gift came upon all men, unto justification of life." And not only was this satisfaction effected by Christ unaided and unattended; but there is no other, Christ excepted, by whom the satisfaction could have been effected. For if other mediators could have been found; if there were many modes of appeasing the divine wrath; why do the sacred penmen lay such stress upon the immense, the unutterable love of God the Father, in sending God the Son into the world, to assume our mortal nature? But as there never existed, with the exception of Christ, one human being, who was exempt from sin; one who could pay, without being encumbered with debts of his own; one who could impart, to his vicarious death, a value proportioned to the dignity of an offended God; one who could suffer without being swallowed up and destroyed in his sufferings; it must follow from these considerations, that no one could have gone to the Father but by the merits of Jesus Christ. Summon before you the teachers of all other religions: and let us question them, Where were ye when Christ gave his blood a ransom for many? Where were ye, when he, by himself was paying the penalty to divine justice? What miracles have ye wrought, that we may believe in you? What have ye done for man? Where is your sacrifice? Where is your victim? Instead of removing the corruption of the human heart, ye have cherished it by your flatteries; ye have aggravated it by iniquitous motives of action, and by the profligacy of your evil examples. Ye were incapable to restore to me that God, of whom I had been deprived, through my sins; or of giving back to him that heart which had been estranged from him by my servile fear.

From such guides, let us turn to Christ, who is *the Way*; and by no other, can man come unto God. He draws us nearer and nearer to God, by weaning us from an excessive attachment to this lower world. No other religion could have promoted true and vital holiness, without which no man can see God.

But Jesus, by the precepts of his Gospel; by suggesting due motives of conduct; by the excellence of his spotless example; by the communications of his Holy Spirit; facilitates our entrance into the Holy City. Above all, it is he whose imputed righteousness sheds a perfume over our prayers, in his great office of mediation: so that if any man sin, we have an advocate with God the Father; and he is the propitiation for our sins. By Christ, as *The Way*, we return to God. No flaming sword now debars access into Paradise.

§ 5. Christ is The Truth. JOHN, xiv. 6: *I am THE TRUTH.*

As the apostles, in their future mission, were likely to encounter all the pride of the learned, and the subtle wisdom of philosophers, it was no small encouragement to be assured that they would be armed with the shield of truth; against which all the weapons of sophistry would be shivered into fragments.

When man lost his way in wandering from the fold of God, he lost the truth at the same time. When Satan shewed a way of knowledge, truth was no longer to be found. The different opinions among men,—the *vain jangling* (as the apostle terms it) is a proof that there is no truth among them. Let any man hear what philosophers have said about God, and he will soon see what human truth is. But the truth of God is this: that the Father sends his Son into the world, that all who believe in him, may be saved. Of this, no philosopher ever thought. But this is the *truth*, on which man has depended ever since it was said in Paradise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The great end of Revelation was to keep up, and explain this *truth*; which was fulfilled in the person of Christ. Without him, neither the law nor the prophets, nor even the world itself, hath any *truth* in them. What are all the types of the Law of Moses? What is that greatest of all, the Passover? It is nothing: unless you add to it, "Christ, *our* Passover, is sacrificed for us." The Law had a shadow of good things to come: but the body and substance, from whence that shadow was formed, is of Christ. Take away the blood of Christ; and what is the blood of bulls and goats? It cannot

take away *sin* ; it cannot do that for which it was commanded to be shed ; and so it was nothing. We are told of a redemption from Egypt ; but that was a temporary redemption : nothing will save us but an eternal redemption, of which that was a figure ; but the *truth* is in Christ. He is the *true* Lamb, the *true* Moses, the *true* Aaron, the *true* Joshua. He is the *truth* of all that were before him ; the *true* leader and captain of the people of God ; the *true* priest, the *true* sacrifice. And this was, probably, the glorious subject of his Exodus, about which Moses and Elias talked with him at his Transfiguration : for neither Moses nor the prophets have any other truth : Christ is the sum and substance of all.

The natural or created world has no truth without Christ. We see and admire the light of the day ; and we may say with the Wise Man, " Truly, the light is sweet ; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But this is the light of the eye : it is not the light of the mind : Christ is *that light* : and therefore he calls himself the *true Light*, whom the sun in the heavens points out to us as the *Sun of Righteousness*. The natural light of the day cannot enlighten a man that is born blind ; but " the light which coming into the world, enlighteneth every man," that alone is the *true light*. And this, Christ shewed when he gave light to a man born blind from his birth : he did this to teach us, that no man is out of the reach of *his light*, be his case what it will. From the enlivening rays of that sun, nothing is hidden.

Bread is of great consequence to man's life ; but it is so only to his *natural life* : that alone is " the true bread which cometh down from heaven," and giveth life unto the world. He that eateth of what we call bread, will die afterwards : and even they that did eat of manna in the wilderness, all died. But this is the true bread from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.

On another occasion, Christ calls himself the *True Vine* ; because everything that can be said of the vine, is fulfilled in him. The vine considered in itself, is but a shadow ; apply it to Christ, and it has sense and substance.

Water is made to quench the thirst ; but he that drinketh of it, shall thirst again. This is the *living water*, of which a man may drink and thirst no more ; and this is what our

Saviour offered, when he said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

In like manner, all things in this world that are most necessary and valuable to man, are *verified* in Christ: in him alone, the truth of them is found. And we may thence affirm, that the world we see without him, is not the *true* world, it is only the shadow of it. The world before us is a bodily world, and made for the body of man: but the true world is made for his spirit, and must be of a spiritual nature. Hence we may understand the two great mistakes which the wise man of the world is sure to make, concerning this world and the other. He judges totally amiss of the Christian and of himself. He supposes his own objects to be real, and the objects of the Christian imaginary: because the one walks by sight; and the other, by faith: whereas the objects of the Christian's faith are the *true* objects, while the man of the world has nothing but the shadow of them; and when he loses the shadow, the Christian gains the substance: when this world goes down and disappears, the world of eternity rises up, and the objects of faith are all realized.

Lord, evermore give us of that world which we see not; and of this which now appears to us, give us more or less, according to thy good pleasure: for we now see how it is possible to possess all things, even while we have nothing. (JONES, of Nayland.)

§ 6. Christ is The Life. JOHN, xiv. 6: *I am The Life.*

THIS attribute of Jesus was not now ascribed to him for the first time. The Evangelist who records this assertion of Christ, had already, in the opening of his sacred history, announced the Saviour under the same appellation: "In him was *Life*." And what a blessed hearing is this, in such a world as ours; where death spoils every prospect, dissolves all society, and renders every possession vain and empty. What is our life? It is a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth; like a cloud that passes over our heads before the wind, and is gone. The only real life is to be found, not in this world, but out of it. Ask the man of pleasure, how he finds it; he must answer

according to matter of fact, that it is a life, which, through the fear of death, brings him into continual bondage. The thought of death may be profitable, as it leads us towards another world : but it turns *this* into Golgotha, a place of a skull ; a place to which men are brought, only to be executed. When the Saviour appears in it, it is no longer that lamentable place it was before : its very nature is changed. For when Christ beheld the funeral procession of a young man that was carried out to be buried, and the widow his mother following, he said unto her, *Weep not*. And what he said to her, he saith to us all ; it is a voice to the whole Christian world. He who spake these words to that poor widow, was himself "the Resurrection and the Life ;" and was about to raise her son. She did not know that ; and therefore she wept. But now we all know it ; and therefore we ought not to weep.

Since the resurrection of Christ, death is no death ; because he has no sting : for sin is the sting of death : and when sin has been taken away, as by the atonement of Christ, death should be no longer terrible. Hence the apostle exclaims, "O death, where is thy *sting*?" For if Christ be risen, it is a proof that the debt is paid ; and that sin which kills us all, is no longer imputed.

From the history of man it is known, that if sin had not entered, man would not have died : for death cometh by sin : without it, there would have been none. The life of Paradise would have been sustained perpetually by the tree of life. But when man fell into sin, he was driven from the tree of life, to return to the dust out of which he was taken. To restore that life which we lost in Adam, and give us that to which the tree of life would have raised us, the Saviour came into the world. How much more than this his own words may promise to us, we cannot affirm : but he tells us, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it *more abundantly* : " whence we may gather most indubitably, that the life which we obtain through Christ, is better than we should have derived from Adam ; and that, for this reason, he is called the *Tree of Life*. Christ does what that would have done, and more ; and as we have no title but through him, he is therefore called *our Life*.

It is a plain doctrine, and generally understood, that Christ becomes our life, by his resurrection from the dead ; and that

therefore he calls himself "the Resurrection and the Life." But the Gospel teaches that Christ is our life before the resurrection of the body; there being a resurrection to grace and newness of life, which begins here, and is the pledge and earnest of the resurrection of the body. Modern Christians seem to think, that the Christian religion is a history of things *without* us: but is it not a history also of something within us? Does it not preach up a principle of life, given to Christians at the time, and distinguishing them from a dead world that lieth in darkness? is not Christ *now* a life to animate and revive the dead? Doth not the prophet say the same, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee life?" Can the sun of the spring shew itself, without raising the roots that lie buried in the earth? Even so he that gives light, must give life at the same time and by the same act. And this must be the life, of which Christ himself speaketh, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." This must be meant of that spiritual life with which we now live: and the occasion on which the words were spoken, the resurrection of Lazarus, relates to the same: for Martha had said, "I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day." But this confession was not sufficient: the resurrection of Lazarus was to shew something *more*: it was to shew not only that the hour is coming, but that it *now is*, when the dead in sin hear his voice and come forth. Reason, therefore, requires that the words which follow, should be strictly taken, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life*:" and were they not strictly fulfilled, when the Gentile world were raised up, by the Gospel, from that hopeless death of sin in which they lay? And are they not fulfilled in every sinner, who, at this time, is raised up from "the death of sin to the life of righteousness?" To such, Jesus Christ is *now* the resurrection and the life; but there are many who say with Martha that they believe "the resurrection at the last day," without seeming to regard or understand *this*: but blessed and holy is he who hath part in this *first* resurrection; to him, Christ is truly *the life*; and over him the second death shall have no power. (JONES, of Nayland.)

§ 7. Christ inculcates on the Disciples faith in his divine nature and power. JOHN, xiv. 8-14: PHILIP saith unto him, 'Lord, be pleased to shew us the Father by some visible representation; and we shall be satisfied.' 9. Jesus saith unto him, 'Have I then been with you so long a time; and hast thou not yet known who and what I am, Philip? He that hath seen me, who am the express image of the invisible God, hath seen the Father: and how then sayest thou, Shew us the Father. 10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and that the Father and I, though distinct persons, are essentially united in the Godhead? This doctrine that I preach unto you, I deliver not of myself, as if it were a private sentiment of my own, separately from the Father: but the Father who inseparably abideth in me, he doeth the works in testimony of me. 11. Believe my assertion that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me on account of the very works which I perform, as the one true God.

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, shall also perform the works that I do, nay greater works than these shall he do, in speaking with divers languages and in conversion of multitudes and in distant lands; and these greater works shall he do, because I go unto my Father, who reserves these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, in honour of my return into glory; 13, and whatsoever ye shall ask in my cause, on my account, and in my service, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in me his Son. 14. If ye shall ask anything in my name, for the promotion of the Gospel, I will do it.'

"No man shall see my face and live." But though the unclouded majesty of God be unveiled only to celestial spirits, or, perhaps, is too dazzling even for purified vision; yet has God the Father been revealed, in a very exalted sense of the word, to mortals, in the office and character of God the Son. "He who hath seen me" (replies Jesus to Philip) "hath seen the Father;" whose attributes are reflected upon us in the ministry of his well-beloved Son, the Messiah.

I. One attribute of God is power. Our Saviour, distinguished by this quality, controls the elements, as the Sovereign of nature; he dispels the pains of sickness; he commands evil spirits to retire before him; and in sending forth his seventy

disciples, invests them with some portion of his own divine power.

This divine Saviour is arraigned as a malefactor, and expires on the cross, amid derision and contempt. Where was then the power of God? Let then the third day arrive; and Jesus reappears. But under what form? Is it the Galilean who was buffeted and spit upon? No: it is the Conqueror of death. Henceforth all authority is given to him, in heaven and in earth. He ascends; and is seated at the right hand of God. He sends forth the Holy Spirit, by whom the apostles, in themselves nothing, frustrate the counsels of confederate princes. True Christians still feel, that the arm of their King is not shortened; but that greater is he who is in them, than he who is in the world. A day is still reserved, when he will raise his saints with glorified bodies, and associate them in his triumphs.

II. Let us advert to the *wisdom* of God. A work is considered to be characterized by wisdom, when on one side, its accomplishment is obstructed by the most complicated difficulties; and on the other side, when they are obviated in an unexpected and perfect manner.

The grand work, proposed in the Gospel, is to recommend men to God, by satisfying his anger at their offences. Even if it had been in the power of men to make this atonement, it was not in their inclination: the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually. These obstacles, insuperable to the wisdom of man, were removed by the counsels of God, stupendous in nature, and complete in effect. Stupendous; in that The Word is made flesh; that his poverty was our wealth; and his death the gate into everlasting life. Complete: in that his death offered to all the attributes of God what each could claim. Hence Christ is termed the *wisdom of God*; and in him, are said to be hid all the *treasures of wisdom*.

III. God is *holy*. Can we read the Gospel, without discerning this attribute displayed in the Son? Christ was exempted from all impurity which must necessarily arise from mortal birth. The whole of his life was fully correspondent to an immaculate conception. He conversed with sinners, unstained by their corruption. He was distinguished by qualities so excellent, as to realize the saying of a Gentile philosopher, that "if virtue could appear in a visible form, its beauty would enrapture all

eyes." Being a lamb without blemish, he was offered a spotless and sufficient sacrifice. He is the *righteous* advocate with the Father; and in consequence of that righteousness, he is "the propitiation for our sins." If God had not been unspeakably holy, never would such a sacrifice have been required; nor unless such a sacrifice had been unspeakably holy, would it have been accepted.

Lastly: God is *Love*. Was not the brightness of this glory displayed in Jesus Christ? His love was perfectly *generous*. Christ was born, not only when our wants were the greatest; but when we were most undeserving of this love. The heir devoted himself for strangers; the legitimate, for the adopted; the obedient, for rebels.

This love was widely extended in effect. The gift of God (says the apostle) is *eternal life*. As if Jesus, to display his love in its full extent, needed the boundless extent of eternity itself.

This love is universal. Christ removed the middle wall of partition. "There is, now, neither Greek nor Jew; circumcision nor uncircumcision; barbarian, Scythian; bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

Thus, in the person and ministry of Jesus, we see God the Father, in the divine power, wisdom, holiness, and mercy. May this manifestation have its perfect work upon our souls. We shall then repose, in full security, upon the *power* of Christ, as The Rock of Ages and The Mighty God. We shall humbly adore the *wisdom* of God, and lower every high thought to the obedience of the Redeemer. His *holiness* will remind us that nothing impure can enter the new Jerusalem. His *mercy* will be a comment upon the words of his beloved disciple, "If Christ hath so loved us, then ought we also to love one another."

§ 8. Wonders wrought by the Apostles. JOHN, xiv. 12.
GREATER *works than these shall ye do.*

OUR Lord having mentioned his own miracles (vv. 10, 11) promises to endow the apostles with a power of working greater wonders than any they had seen him do.

This power may be instanced in working miracles ; in the gift of tongues ; and in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

1. How fully Jesus performed his promise, in reference to miracles, is plain from the history of the "*Acts of the Apostles.*" The very shadow of Peter, passing by, cured the sick on whom it fell, and who were laid in the streets for that purpose. (v. 17.) Handkerchiefs and aprons, which had touched the body of Paul, being applied to the sick and possessed, banished both the diseases and the evil spirits. Elymas, the sorcerer, was struck blind, by the word of Paul ; Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, by the word of Peter. If the apostles had not actually possessed this power, they would not have exposed themselves to ridicule by commanding the blind to see, when the malady or suffering was not likely to be removed. Nor was this supernatural power confined to the disciples : St. Paul conferred it on the Corinthian Church : it is not probable that he would have laid down explicit directions for the use of her miraculous gifts, if they were merely imaginary, and not actually conferred by him.

2. Nor should we, on this occasion, forget the gift of languages bestowed on the apostles ; and which they were able to communicate to others. The utterance in other tongues is one of the most stupendous miracles, which graced and aided the Christian Church. The apostles had been bred up in humble occupations ; and were natives of Galilee, a country proverbially despised. What then could be a more evident proof of a divine inspiration, when uneducated Galileans did, in an instant, what the study of a whole life is rarely able to achieve ? Here was no room for delusion : every hearer was a judge for himself, whether the apostles were speaking in the native language of each respective hearer, or whether they were babbling in unintelligible jargon.

3. Yet if these miracles are not thought to shew greater power than Christ's, we may refer the greatness whereof he speaks, to the effects which they were to produce on the minds of men. For, in that respect, the apostles' miracles were vastly superior to our Lord's, converting more people in one day than was done by all the miracles Jesus performed in during the course of his ministry. They converted thousands at once ; made the Gospel to fly, like lightning, through the world ; and

beat down everything which stood in opposition to the faith of their Master. (MACKNIGHT.) The ministry of Jesus was confined to Judea; and his intention of bringing his other sheep into the fold was often couched in figurative language, as a truth which even his disciples were unable to bear. But by the heralds of the Gospel, innumerable conversions were made not only in Judea and Syria, but throughout the provinces of the Roman empire. The sound went forth into all the earth, and its words unto the ends of the world.

These greater miracles were not effected by the natural power of the apostles, but "because Christ went unto the Father." In heaven, he employed his intercession in behalf of the first preachers: and sent down upon them the gifts of the Holy Spirit as their monitor, protector, and guide. Whatsoever they asked in his name as conducive to the success of their apostolic labour, "that (declares Christ) I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son;" glorified in the Son by the honour conferred on the Son by the miraculous progress of the Gospel; glorified by its sanctifying effect on the human mind; glorified by the display of the divine attributes exerted in this mode of saving a lost world.

§ 9. Success of Prayer in the Name of Christ. JOHN, xiv. 14: *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

OUR Lord assures his disciples that in the discharge of their apostolical labours, they would receive all necessary aid upon offering up their requests. While they thus learned humility, by observing that their wonderful works were not effected by their own natural strength, their faith in the divinity of their Master would be proportionably augmented: since to hear and answer their prayers implied, on the part of Christ, an omniscience and omnipotence; and consequently a unity of essence between him and the Father. Thus what, in this passage, "*I will do*," is at v. 23 of ch. xvi. "*the Father will give you*."

But whatever be the primary meaning of the promise attached to "*praying in the name*" of Jesus, his mediatorial

capacity, in its widest sense, is virtually included : and, in this acceptation, the universal Christian Church has interpreted the promise, by closing each prayer in her public Liturgy, with the reverent acknowledgment of "through *Jesus Christ our Lord* ;" or words similar in meaning.

But are there not many whose experience seems to contradict this assurance of Jesus Christ ? ' We have prayed in his name,' say they, ' and yet have not obtained the object of our petitions.' Yet, ' let God be true ; and every man a liar.' If we examine into the meaning of our Lord's words, we shall find that it is not he who closes his ears to our prayers, but it is we who do not pray aright.

Whenever Christ makes any such promise, it is his disciples and they alone whom he addresses. He does not say, '*If any one*,' but ' If ye that believe in me ; ye that love and honour me ; ye that obey and serve me.' The apostles commonly cast out evil spirits by the name of Jesus ; but the exorcists could not, who did not believe in Jesus ; and yet had the confidence to use his name. There are many such among us ; who use the sacred name of Jesus, and still continue in their sins. And how can such expect that he should hear them ? The man in the Gospel knew better when he said, ' We know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.' (John, ix. 31.) Besides, none can pray aright in Christ's name without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. For as St. Paul says, (Rom. viii. 26), ' We know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered.' The Spirit intercedes by helping our infirmities, by directing our intentions, by strengthening our faith, and by supplying us with such fervent and earnest affections, which no words are able to express ; and none can know, save he that searcheth the heart, and knoweth the mind of the Spirit.

And what does our Lord mean by *asking* ? He explains the duty of asking, where he supposes that a man went to borrow three loaves of his friend : " Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend ; yet because of his *importunity*, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, *Ask*, and it shall be given you ; *seek*, and ye shall find ; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you." It is plain that the

three commands, *Ask, seek, knock*, must be taken conjointly: "ask, so as to seek; seek, so as to knock:" that is, 'A man must continue in prayer' (Rom. xii.) and 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thessa. v.) as the apostle enjoins. Our Lord himself prayed three times, for the same thing, in the same words; and spake a parable to the intent, that men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." And, therefore, it is in this sense, our Lord is to be understood in now addressing his disciples; he will not grant what we ask once, and no more: but if we faint not, and continue to pray earnestly, instantly, importunately, then he will favourably listen.

Again. In this promise of doing any thing we ask, it is implied that we request such things as are necessary to our doing good, to our being good, and thereby to our obtaining eternal salvation by Christ. Thus, in that divine form which our Lord hath composed for our daily use, he has taught us to pray, that the name of God may be hallowed; and that the kingdom of his grace may come into our hearts. We do not pray for honourable stations, large estates, or long life; but that he would vouchsafe such daily maintenance as may be necessary; that he would forgive us our transgressions; and that he would deliver us from whatever he knows to be evil. Whatsoever we ask, that is thus good for us, our Lord promises to do.

For this success in praying, we must ask in his name; that is, believing that, in ourselves, we deserve not the good things we solicit. We must ask only for his sake, trusting and depending upon his intercession. For though it be not necessary to name the name of Christ in every petition, yet we must keep our faith all along fixed upon him as the only Mediator between God and men, by whom alone there is nothing which we may not receive, if it be expedient. He will do the very thing we ask if that be good: otherwise he will do something for us, which will conduce more to the desired purpose; or which, all things considered, will be better. Thus when St. Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, and the Lord answered, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' the apostle looked upon his prayer as fully answered; because it was a greater blessing to have the grace of Christ always sufficient for him, than to be freed from any particular trouble.

But *how* doth our Lord effect what we ask in his name? Not by altering the whole course of nature. If we ask for food convenient, he gives it by blessing us in our particular calling; or he directs us to some such means as, by his assistance, will certainly effect it. If we pray for his Holy Spirit to assist and direct us, he gives it in the performance of our public and private devotions; in hearing or studying his sacred word; and in receiving the Holy Sacrament. Thus whatsoever we ask, we must use such means as he has ordained for it: otherwise we have no more ground to expect it, than that he should work miracles for us.

If, then, any of Christ's faithful servants and soldiers, living in his true faith and fear, shall heartily, earnestly, and frequently ask anything of Almighty God, that is really good for them; and if they ask it in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, trusting on him and on him alone for it, and in the use of the proper means;—he will either do that very thing they ask, or something that is better for them. If they pray in vain, they must have failed in some or other of the preceding particulars. For otherwise it is impossible they should not receive it, as it is impossible for God to lie. (BISHOP BEVERIDGE.)

§ 10. Christ presses an obedience founded upon love, and promises the aid of the Holy Spirit. JOHN, xiv. 15–17: *If ye really love me, keep my commandments*: that is a surer test of your affection, than your sorrow at parting with me.

16. *And for your encouragement I will, as Mediator, pray the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete [comforter, advocate, counsellor] that he may supply the want of my bodily presence, and continue with you and my Church, not for a little while, as I have done, but to the end of your life, 17, even the Holy Spirit of truth who dispels error, and guides into truth: whom the corrupt worldlings cannot receive, as ye shall do; because they neither spiritually discern him; nor, from their sensual passions, know him in his influences: but ye shall know him; for he will dwell with you, and abide within you.*

THE commandments to which our Lord alludes, may denote

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those particular instructions, which he had given or was likely to give for the due performance of their apostolic office : but to the apostles themselves, and to us also, the words of Jesus are not without force, in the widest sense : *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. In vain we flatter ourselves that we love God, unless we keep his commandments ; neither let us flatter ourselves that we can fulfil his commandments, if we do not love him. The observance of the law is a proof of our love ; but love is the principle of that observance.

That our Lord might more effectually excite the minds of his disciples to the obedience of love, he adds the promise of sending down to them a powerful auxiliary in forwarding the success of their labours. *I will pray the Father ; and he will give you another Paraclete*. The expressions of our blessed Lord plainly shew, that he had chiefly in view, not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, but the directing and comforting influences of his grace. For these alone were to *abide* with Christians *for ever* : these alone the *world could not receive*, because they would not suffer themselves to see or know them : and though, in appearance, a less illustrious, they are, in reality, a more important gift than those of Tongues and Miracles. For though the latter were powerful means of making religion believed, the former only can bring it to be practised : and therefore it is highly necessary to teach and inculcate the doctrine of inward grace ; that men may earnestly pray for it, faithfully use it, and heartily rejoice in it.

That such influence is actually vouchsafed is a doctrine clearly founded on Holy Writ. There we are taught, that human nature is corrupt and degenerate, and no longer able to stand alone against the temptations of *our Adversary the Devil, who as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*, (1 Pet. v. 8) : that therefore, our Maker who still requires obedience from his creatures, and yet does not require impossibilities, has from the beginning striven with the bad (Gen. vi.) ; and established the good by his Spirit within them (Ps. li.) ; though it was more abundantly poured forth when the Gospel was published. In the Gospel we learn, that “ except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven ” (John, iii.) ; that, by the spirit of adoption, changing our nature and condition, we are entitled, through faith in

Christ, to call God our Father; and that "if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children; much more shall our heavenly Father give the *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him." (Luke, xi.) In this declaration, our Blessed Redeemer evidently means his saving graces; which (to use the preceding words) "every one that seeketh, findeth;" and which answer, in the spiritual life, to bread in the natural. Accordingly, St. Paul prays that "the fellowship" or communion, the communication of the blessings "of the Holy Ghost," may be with them all, as well as the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God. Certainly this means an influence from the Blessed Spirit on the soul, of which every true believer, in every age, might partake.

Thus then the Holy Ghost is given to all Christians. And we are taught more particularly, he opens our understandings and hearts that we may understand our lost condition, by sin actual and original; may attend to the offices of the Gospel; and know the things that are freely given us of God. (Luke, xxiv. 45; Acts, xvi. 14.) He also inclines our souls, not only to embrace, but obey the truth. (1 Pet. i. 2.) Such as comply with his motions, he leads uniformly on to their maturity in goodness, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Rom. viii. 14; Eph. iv. 13.) Those who deviate from the right way, he brings back, by representing, partly, the terrors of religion, partly, the mercies; renews them in the spirit of their minds, and forms them again to the image of God. (Eph. iv. 23.) In this manner, he conducts the whole flock of Christ; helps their infirmities in their devotions, making intercession within them (Rom. viii. 26); enables them to profit by the ordinances appointed for them (1 Cor. xii. 7); teaches them all things which they need to know (1 John, ii. 20); in every affliction and temptation, makes his grace sufficient for them. (2 Cor. xii. 9.) Proportionably as they use these advantages well, he fills them with the fruits of the Spirit which are in all goodness and righteousness and truth. (Eph. v. 9.) He thus is present with them, and dwells in them continually more and more; so that they grow up into Temples of the Holy Ghost, habitations of God through the Spirit. (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

Let us often consider, then, what thankfulness it deserves, that God's Holy Spirit is thus active for our benefit: and at the

same time let us always remember, by whom this blessing is procured for us: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.* The intercession of our blessed Lord, founded on his sacrifice of himself to divine justice in our stead, this is the channel through which grace is derived from the fountain of all good; and a lively faith in him is the only way of opening our hearts to receive the salutary streams of it. But then, as *Faith without works is dead*, we must be sure carefully to improve this invaluable gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore, ever open our hearts to his heavenly inspirations: which, as they will never prompt us to anything, but what scripture plainly dictates; and by that one mark, are easily distinguished from every false pretence to the Spirit; so they will effectually enable us, and they alone can, to persevere in our duty against all temptations. They will fill us with comfort under afflictions; daily improve us in all virtue and godliness of living; and make us, at length, completely meet for the blessed inheritance of the Saints in light. (ARCHBISHOP SECKER.)

§ 11. Christ consoles his disciples with the promise of many comforts which will attend as rewards of an affectionate obedience. JOHN, xiv. 18-24: ENCOURAGE yourselves, therefore: *I will not leave you as destitute orphans. I will come to you after my resurrection, and in my spiritual presence. 19. Yet a little while, and the world [the Jews] will see me no more: but ye shall see me again after my resurrection; and because I shall return to life, ye shall live also: my resurrection is not only a pledge of your own; but it is the fore-runner of the promised Comforter (v. 16), by whose quickening influence ye shall live a life of grace and holiness.*

20. And *at that day* when I fulfil this promise of sending you another Comforter, *ye shall experimentally know, that I am in my Father; and ye, in me; and I, in you:* ye shall evidently perceive and distinctly understand the essential union between me and the Father; and the intimate and inseparable union between me and yourselves.

21. But this union is accorded to those only who evidence their love by their obedience: for *he that hath in mind my commandments, and observeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he*

that loveth me, shall be loved by my Father : and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22. *Judas (not Iscariot, but the brother of James,) considering this manifestation to be that of a temporal monarch, saith to Jesus, Lord, wherefore wilt thou manifest thyself unto us disciples, and not unto the Jews in general?*

[Our Lord proceeds to intimate that this manifestation is of a spiritual, invisible, and inward nature; and that this distinction is occasioned by the love or contempt of him, and by obedience or disobedience to his commands.] 23. *Jesus answered and said unto Judas, If any man sincerely love me, he will observe my precepts. And my Father will love him; and we will come unto him with manifest tokens of our spiritual presence; and will make our continual-in-dwelling with him, as in a Temple.* 24. *On the contrary, whoever does not really love me, observes not my precepts: and as the doctrine which ye hear, is not only mine, but also the Father's who sent me; he who is devoid of an obedience working by love, forfeits all marks of God's favour, and all hope of his spiritual manifestations.*

THE promises with which Christ here consoles his disciples, are of general application.

Verses 18, 23 : The true disciples of Christ have assurances of *protection*. In any circumstances of life, they are not helpless and destitute orphans : their father is God : and God is an everlasting father. They have received the adoption of sons. They are the objects of divine love.

Verse 19 : The true disciples of Christ *live*, because Christ lives. The life of the pupil is bound up in the life of the Master. They shall live spiritually a divine life. They shall live eternally. We shall see Christ. What tears ought not this hope to wipe away from our eyes ! The world shall not see him :—what good things of this life can afford it any comfort under so great a misfortune ! Because Christ lives, we shall live also. Our life and glory are joined to those of our Head. His resurrection is the cause and pattern of ours ; and our life, a participation of his.

Verse 20 : True disciples are made to know and appreciate their *fellowship* with the Father and with the Son. Union with Christ is the life of believers : and their relation to him, and, through him, to God, is their unspeakable happiness.

Verse 23 : In the heart of a true disciple, the Father and the Son will come and dwell by the gracious tokens of an immediate and inseparable presence. Their bodies are the temples of God. The heavenly visitors do not manifest themselves at a distance : they take up their *abode* with him. His heart is their home. If our Lord had been a creature, though of the highest rank, it would have been blasphemy in him to have joined himself in this manner with God.

Do any of us experience these inward joys arising from the manifestation of the divine presence? We have surely reason to say, by way of admiration, that which the apostle said by way of enquiry, "Lord, how and whence is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world!" What have we done to deserve these gracious and distinguishing manifestations! Nay, how much have we done to forfeit them! even more than many from whom they are withheld. If we are strangers to the spiritual comforts which Christ has promised, it is that we love him not (vv. 21-23); and therefore, keep not his words and commandments. There is an inseparable connexion between love and obedience: love is the root; obedience is the fruit. Discoveries of the divine grace and glory are privileges confined to those whose faith worketh by love; and whose love for their Saviour induces them to obey his commandments. It is neither study, nor wit, nor learning, which render us acceptable with God; but fidelity in performing his will. A soul which walks exactly in the way which God has pointed out to it, has, by means of a practical and sanctifying knowledge (v. 21) a deeper insight into divine things, than those learned men of the world who know every thing except how to love and obey God. Nor is this tribute of love and obedience grievous in itself, or protracted to a tedious length of years. As the absence of Christ (v. 19) during the time of his burial, being only *a little while* in respect of the apostles; so, with respect to ourselves, it is but *a little while* to the end of our life, or even to the end of the world. For every thing passes away as a dream, a shadow, or a flash of lightning. This shortness of time furnishes to the Christian a new motive for perseverance in his allegiance; and to the wicked, an urgent reason to return, by a speedy repentance, to the duty of *keeping the commandments* of their Redeemer.

§ 12. Our Lord promises to his disciples the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. JOHN, xiv. 25, 26: *THESE things I have spoken unto you, while I continue with you: but the Paraclete, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father, after my departure, will send in my name, to act in the promotion of my cause, he will teach you all things necessary to be known in discharging your offices, and remind you of all things which I have hitherto said to you relating to my precepts or my doctrines.*

THE truths, which Jesus had spoken to the disciples in his personal ministry, had not been fully understood by them: but, when the Holy Spirit, the Author of all holiness, as well as the Teacher of all truth to man, should come to them; he would more efficaciously instruct them, powerfully removing all their prejudices, and assisting all their faculties to receive the truth. This, indeed, in the case of the apostles, was effected in the way of immediate revelation, by which they were infallibly preserved from all error, and guided into all the truth. Yet, even this revelation was principally made, by causing them to recollect the doctrines, promises, and precepts, which Jesus had given them; and by enabling them to see the truth, excellency, and glory of them, in the clearest and most convincing manner. Thus our Lord, in his teaching, referred to the Old Testament; and taught nothing, but what that ancient revelation, thoroughly understood, fully coincided with: and the apostles referred to the personal ministry of Christ, and taught nothing, but what his words, fully understood, entirely warranted. The same truths, therefore, are taught in every part of Scripture; in some more obscurely, in others more clearly: and any pretended new revelation, which teaches things contrary to the written word, or manifestly not contained in it; is so palpable an imposture, that not only no authority of popes and councils can support it, but even miracles themselves would be insufficient to establish its divine authority. (SCORR.)

A new Revelation of this nature, must proceed from the presumption of false teachers. The apostles, in pursuance of Christ's promise, received from the Holy Spirit that inspiration which enabled them not only to give a true history of his life and death; but also gave them the most perfect recollection of all the words which he had spoken to them: so that they have

been able to transmit to posterity the identical words which Jesus uttered in his sermons; and in his different discourses with them, the Jews, and others.

The writings and records of these disciples supply to us the place and uses of the Spirit's infallible guidance, vouchsafed to them. They laid the foundation; we are to keep to it. Their business was to plant a new doctrine; ours, to hold it fast. They indited the Scriptures; we have nothing to do but to study and obey them.

The promise which to the apostles was absolute, may, however, be allowed to the Church, in all ages, under certain conditions and limitations. The apostles were infallible, as following the dictates of the Holy Ghost, in all they spoke and wrote: the Church is infallible, so far as her determinations agree with their writings. The apostles and the Church may be compared to the Star, and the Eastern Magi. The Star was directed by the finger of God, and could not but go right to the place where Christ was. But the Magi were led by the star to Christ: so that they might follow it, if they would: if they would not, they might choose. So was it between the apostles as the vehicles of spiritual knowledge, and the Church. They, in their writing, were infallibly assisted, to propose nothing as a Divine truth, but what was so. The Church is also led into all truth; but it is by the intervening of the apostles' writings. But it is, as the Magi were led by the star, or as a pilot by his card and compass, led sufficiently, not irresistibly; led so, as that she *may* follow; not so, as that she *must*. This seems to give the true state of the case; and shews, how, in this respect too, the Spirit *abides* with Christ's disciples for ever. For he abides with all whom he assists; but he does not make all whom he assists, infallible. We have not the like visible and wonderful effects of his Divine Presence now, which the first disciples had; because we need them not. But, we have, at least, if we are not unfaithful and wanting to ourselves, we may have, as much as is sufficient for our present circumstances. Consolations and instructions are ever at hand to all who are diligent to ask and improve them. (STANHOPE.)

§ 13. Our Saviour bequeaths his divine peace to his disciples. JOHN, xiv. 27-31: AND as I am now departing, *peace*

I leave with you as my legacy: my peace I give unto you; even the consoling peace of God, which shall keep your hearts and minds in the season of danger. Not as the world gives peace, give I unto you, in the ordinary form of salutation or benediction, ineffectual, and often insincere. Let not, therefore, your heart be troubled; neither let it shrink back through fear of future danger: my peace will calm your alarms.

28. Ye need not be discouraged: for as *ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away to the Father by my death; so did I add, that I will come again unto you by my resurrection. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice on my account, because I said "I go to the Father;"* since my departure is an exchange of humiliation for the highest exaltation. *For my Father is greater than I.* Ye see me in this world inferior to the Father. I have acted, in my mediatorial character, as his apostle and ambassador. I have assumed the human nature, and must be obedient unto death.

[These words afford a strong argument for the proper divinity of our Lord. For had he been a mere man, or even a creature of the highest order, the comparison would have been foolish and impertinent. MACKNIGHT.]

29. *And now I have beforehand told you of my sufferings, my return to my Father, and the descent of the Holy Spirit; that when the event shall have come to pass, ye may the more firmly believe by the correspondence with predictions.*

30. But *I shall not hereafter have time to discourse much with you: for Satan (Luke, xxii. 53,) the prince of this world, is coming to make his final effort against me, in thwarting my purposes: nevertheless he has no power over me who have no sin.*

31. *But the result of his coming will be, that the world may know that I love the Father; and refuse nothing whereby his glory may be advanced: and even as the Father hath commanded me, even so I do, however painful the obedience in the ensuing conflict.*

Arise, now, from table; and let us go hence to Gethsemane.

OUR Saviour had assured his disciples that he would not leave them comfortless, but would send to them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. In the mean time, "*Peace,*" he adds, "*I leave with you;*" a substantial blessing; such as the world cannot give nor take away. Therefore, "*let not your heart be troubled*" at

my departure ; “ *nor let it be afraid* ” at any calamity which may threaten.

These promises extend to all, in all ages, who believe in the name of Christ. Let us survey our rich inheritance.

Christian peace is a calm state of mind, disturbed by no guilt, satisfied with its lot, and reposing with cheerful confidence on the care of a Father who is in heaven.

1. Of such a peace, one great enemy is *guilt*. How can peace dwell with trouble and perplexity, with shame and remorse, with painful recollections, and foreboding fears ? “ What hast thou to do with peace ? ” is the taunting reply, with which conscience forbids the guilty soul to listen to the voice of consolation.

But the Gospel declares the ability and willingness of Christ to cancel our guilt, and to restore us to the divine favour. From the contrite who rely on this great Redeemer, the curse is removed : for their reconciliation with God is effected ; the disturbing power of guilt is destroyed ; and a sure foundation laid, on which the superstructure of peace may rest.

2. Another certain obstacle to peace is an impure and *unholy disposition*. How extravagant and inconsistent are the objects which it presents to the mind ; what lawless desires it excites ; what violent means it prompts for attainment ; what turbulent passions it keeps in constant agitation ! What can be the peace of that mind which is swayed by ambition or avarice ; which is full of envy, murder, deceit, malignity ; proud, boastful, an inventor of evil things, implacable, unmerciful. These and such as these are the works and dispositions of the flesh : but they have no place in the Christian character : for “ they who are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.” The religion of Christ is a dispensation of holiness, and the grand instrument to promote it. It is the preparation of the soul for the enjoyment of a state of peace here, which is similar in its origin, nature, and means, to that eternal peace which shall be enjoyed above.

3. *Anxiety about the future* is another obstacle to the enjoyment of true peace. The want of a sufficient provision for a family ; the fear of some approaching loss or pain ; the dread of some threatened danger ; will often render the mind a prey to the severest disquiet. But the Gospel of Christ lessens the

value of all human things, and substitutes for them objects of a higher and nobler class;—the favour of the blessed God, the salvation of an immortal soul, an interest in the death and intercession of our Saviour, the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of adoption, the hope which is full of immortality. These appear to him who is properly trained in the school of Christ, objects of inestimable value; so that, in comparison of them, all anxieties of a worldly kind are of little moment. Our Blessed Lord has taught his disciples to repose upon the parental care of their heavenly Father. “Take no anxious-thought saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed,—for after all these things do the Gentiles seek: but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

These three grand sources of inquietude, *guilt*, and *unholy dispositions*, and *care*, being thus removed, there remains no obstacle for peace; even the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Not that this blessed peace will be necessarily enjoyed by *all* the disciples of Jesus; for, alas! our faith is often imperfect; and our sanctification, incomplete. Bodily indisposition will sometimes enfeeble the mind, and render it the prey of groundless apprehension. But, in reference to the proper and direct tendency of the Christian system; in reference to the intention and design of its great Founder; it must be confidently affirmed, that wherever its principles have full scope; wherever the heart embraces it without reserve; wherever its precepts are cheerfully received and followed; wherever prayer is constantly and devoutly addressed to God; wherever the Holy Scriptures are valued as the sources of consolation and the guides of life;—there a holy tranquillity and peace of mind will be obtained, and the invaluable bequest of our Saviour really enjoyed,—“My peace I leave unto you.” (VENN.)

§ 14. Our Lord after arising from table, continues his discourse, previously to proceeding to Gethsemane. He represents himself under the emblem of a vine. The sacred supper had just been finished, in which the fruit of the vine was made the

outer sign of Evangelical blessings. The emblem was familiar to the Jews, who, as a Church, had been often spoken of by the prophets, as a vine planted on the hills of Judea. Our Lord exhorts his disciples to remain firm in their faith, obedience, and communion with him. JOHN, xv. 1-11 : *I am the true vine ; and my Father is the husbandman. 2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away : every nominal disciple is punished by being cut off from the privileges of my Church : and every branch which brings forth fruit, he cleaneth by pruning it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

3. *Ye also are now clean, being purified from the iniquities of a sinful world, by the sanctifying discipline of the holy doctrine which I have spoken unto you :* but many prejudices still remain to be rooted out : and, therefore, 4, *continue steadfast in me by faith and obedience ; and I will continue in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself by its own virtue, but must wither, unless it continue in the juice and sap of the vine ; so neither can ye perform at all any acceptable obedience, unless ye continue in me, and receive fresh supplies of grace. 5. I am the vine ; and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, he bringeth forth much fruit : for separate from me, and apart from my co-operating grace, ye can do nothing.*

6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast out, like the branch which is withered ; and men gather the branches, and throw them into the fire ; and they are burned.*

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words and instructions abide in you, ye shall ask whatsoever ye will ; and if it be subservient to the glory of God and to the furtherance of your ministry, it shall be done for you.*

8. *In this, is my Father most eminently glorified,—that ye bring forth much fruit : thereby recommending the Gospel and converting sinners : and thus, at the same time, ye prove yourselves to be my true disciples.*

9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I also loved you : continue ye, therefore, in love towards me. 10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall continue in being the objects of my love : even as I have always kept my Father's commandments, and so continue to possess his love.*

11. *These things have I spoken unto you, not to grieve you as*

though I distrusted your affection ; but *that*, through your obedience, *I may continue to have joy in you ; and that your joy in me may be complete.*

MANY striking resemblances between our Lord and the emblem which he has adopted of himself, might be suggested ; as in the cheering nature of its fruit ; the subjection to the violence of the wine-press ; and in sending out wide-spreading tendrils in type of a far-spread Gospel : but the most edifying contemplation of this Scripture will be found in contemplating ourselves as the branches of this mystic vine.

The first and most obvious inference is the necessity of adhering to Christ, in reference to the aids of divine grace. 4, 5. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine ; ye are the branches : without me, ye can do nothing.*

This natural helplessness of man towards conciliating the favour of a righteous God, is repeatedly inculcated in Holy Writ. To what purpose did Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners, if sinners can be saved without him ? To what purpose did he give himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. ii. 6), if men could have redeemed themselves ? Why was he delivered for our sins, and raised again for our justification (Rom. iv. 25), if we could have justified ourselves without his resurrection ? But, in truth, we feel that our best endeavours are often unable to resist the force of temptation ; that our very best actions are alloyed by worldly motives ; that we often omit the very duties which our consciences approve. If, then, we can do nothing effectual to the salvation of our souls ; no other resource remains than to abide in the mystical vine, our Redeemer Christ. By that union, the mind is purified ; the will is inclined ; the judgment is guided ; the evil spirit is resisted ; new motives to godliness are supplied ; our infirmities are strengthened ; and grace is imparted in due measure. The paralytic man who was grovelling in imbecility, takes up his bed and walks. He goes on his way rejoicing ; and gratefully acknowledges that God who worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.

But this doctrine of divine grace must not be so loosely interpreted, that we should deem ourselves passive instruments

in the hand of God. Our Saviour inculcates the necessity of an active and practical righteousness.

Let us remember our assistances to godliness. "*He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*" These words convey the strongest assurances, that by continuing in union with him, we shall derive from him all necessary aids.

These spiritual advantages bring an awful responsibility. If the Master of the vineyard had been negligent of his charge, he could not have complained, that his vine brings forth wild grapes. But not only does he labour, that each branch may be distinguished by fruit; but *every branch that beareth fruit, he pruneth that it may bring forth more fruit.* As the best vines may have something superfluous and luxuriant; so the best of men are not exempt from pride, self-confidence, and worldly attachment. But the Christian who can duly appreciate the dispensations of God, even the painful prunings will be deemed instruments for additional and more eminent service.

Our Saviour encourages us to the practice of his religion by appealing to our noble ambition of promoting the honour of God. "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples.*" Fruit, therefore, is the great discrimination between the true and false disciple. *Every branch that beareth not fruit, my Father taketh away.* Each false disciple is cut off from the parent vine, and forfeits his claim to the privileges of Christian communion. He is *withered*: his soul becomes dry and barren, and is totally estranged from the refreshing and fertilizing effusions of divine grace. *He is gathered with hypocrites and apostates, and cast into the fire.*

On the other hand, true disciples cumber not the ground. They have more than specious leaves: like trees planted by the water-side, they bring forth their fruit in due season; and after having flourished in the temporary vineyard of this world, they will be transplanted into the paradise of heaven.

§ 15. Christ renews his exhortation to mutual love. JOHN, xv. 12-16: *THIS is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* 13. As to my own affection towards you, *what greater love has any man manifested, than that a man should lay down his life for the preservation and happiness of his*

friends? Ye are my friends, for whom I will lay down my life, if ye do whatsoever I command you: and my commandment is, that ye make my love for you a standard of your love for your brethren, even to laying down your lives for their sake. 15. The distance between us is great; but I do not any longer call you servants: (John, xiii. 26; Matt. x. 24; Luke, xvii. 10) for the servant is not admitted into the secrets of his master, and knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things which I have heard and received in charge from my Father, I have declared to you.

16. In these claims upon your love, remember that *ye have not first chosen, and adopted me as your associate: but I, the Author of the Gospel, have chosen and appointed you as my ministers and apostles, that ye should go out into the world, and bring forth fruit among the Gentiles; and that your fruit and result of your labours should remain to the remotest generations; and that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name and cause, tending to the furtherance and encouragement of your evangelical labours, he may give it you.*

The commandment of Christ, "*Love ye one another, as I have loved you,*" must be taken in the sense which is attached to similar commandments, "*Be ye perfect or holy, even as your heavenly Father is perfect or holy.*" We must entertain very unworthy notions of Christ, and very extravagant ideas of ourselves, if we can imagine that a mortal man whose heart is animated with the purest Christian charity, is capable of equalling the kindness of the Great Redeemer towards us. But Christ whose yoke is easy, will not demand impossibilities: hence his issuing the precept implies the necessity of imitating his divine charity, as far as our humbler powers will permit. Among the qualities of Christ's love, we cannot fail to observe, that it was *voluntary and disinterested* in its original principle; and in reference to those who experienced it, *universal*.

1. Our Saviour's love to mankind was voluntary and disinterested, in principle. *Herein is love* (saith St. John) *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* All the marvellous methods of grace, and the great things done and suffered for us by Christ, were not by way of return to any former kindness on our part; but

the motions of mere mercy, and his own will. He sought not ours, but us. His happiness could have suffered no diminution by our misery; but when we had deserved to perish, he rather chose to have his mercy glorified in our rescue from destruction, than to signalize his justice in our eternal punishment. And of this choice no other reason can be assigned, than his own exceeding goodness, and the incomprehensible greatness of his love. He would have mercy, because he would have mercy: and mercy triumphed over judgment; not because it was better for him, but because it was more profitable for us.

Philosophy and human prudence when they urge this duty of love upon us, proceed upon principles of profit and convenience, accruing to private persons or public societies. But though the Christian religion does not altogether exclude these motives; yet it has others, peculiar to itself. It requires us to do good, because it is good; and expects us to think the command and will of our Master sufficient inducement. We are enjoined to imitate, in some degree, the benevolence of God himself: for as Jehovah is bountiful from the essential goodness of his own nature, and cannot receive in return any benefits from those whom he most highly favours; so we, moved by an inherent principle of Christian perfection, must not compute what advantage will result to us from acts of liberality. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others."

2. The love of Christ was *universal*. He came to *ransom many*. It was the *world* which he loved. (John, iii. 16.) He was lifted up, in order to draw *all men* to him. (John, xii. 32.) They, therefore, who are commanded to love one another as Christ hath loved us, must extend their affections beyond a narrowness of spirit. To love our neighbours only, is a point of convenience: to love our acquaintance only, is a matter of pleasure: to love our friends only, is gratitude and justice: to love those only from whom we expect favours, is selfish interest: to love our relations only, is the dictate of nature. To a love, thus limited in extent, publicans and heathens may be equal: but the Christian must do good to *all men*: no one is excluded from his benevolence.

In this universality of Christ's love, we behold his immense charity for sinners: for all men had sinned, and become guilty before God. He came to save the chief of sinners; towards

whom he commended the love of God, by tasting death for enemies and rebels. He laboured long and often, to gather those who would not be persuaded to come in. He persisted in teaching, exhorting, reproving, lamenting, and weeping over the most intractable. The malice and obstinacy of wicked men could not induce him to desist from his merciful labours; even when the continuance of them exasperated his enemies into attempts upon his person and life. That life was soon poured forth in confirmation of his love. The greatest love which had ever been heard of, was expressed when a man deliberately laid down his life, to preserve that of his valued friend and benefactor. Many have rushed upon danger in the field of battle, or on a sudden emergency; and thus lost their lives *honourably* in defence of those who were of superior rank or merit; and to whom their obligations were great. A few instances are recorded of such, as were deliberately willing to part with life, to preserve those whom they greatly loved. But Christ, the Lord of glory, laid down his life in the midst of agony and ignominy, for those who were infinitely inferior to him, and the fit objects of his indignation and abhorrence.

In this exertion of love, Christ is our pattern, which we are bound, by every motive of gratitude, to follow in zealous imitation, though with unequal steps. Let us remember that if any worthlessness could have wrought in Christ contempt of our condition; we must have continued miserable and lost to all eternity. They therefore, who love, as he did, must put on bowels of charity for the most despicable, the most obstinate, the worst of men. How can we exclude, whom God hath not excluded? Shall not the condescension, the meekness, the patience, the sorrow and anguish, the mysterious incarnation, the afflicted life, the painful and ignominious death of Christ;—shall not all these things conciliate, on our part, forbearance to enemies and charity to the brethren? These are the only methods of expressing our love to Christ himself; and what we thus benevolently do to the very least of his brethren, he considers as done to himself. (DEAN STANHOPE.)

§ 16. Friendship of Christ. JOHN, xv. 15: I HAVE called you friends.

IF never man spake as Christ spake, never did man love as Christ loved. In his farewell discourse, his accents are those of a friend, anxious to evince an unchanging tenderness: "henceforth I call you not servants; but I have called you friends."

Let us consider in what manner, our Saviour has condescended to realize the qualities and advantages of friendship.

I. One privilege of friendship is the *freedom of approach*. When a friend is coming, the door stands widely open, as if not only to admit but to invite him.

The distance which sin had placed between man and God, needed the aid of some powerful Intercessor, to procure for us new access into his presence. But we read of no mediator to bring us to Christ. His language is, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.*" "*Come, and buy wine and milk, without money and without price.*"

2. Another privilege of friendship is a *favourable construction of all occurrences*. It is a kind thing to hide the blemishes of a friend, and to proclaim his good qualities. If a scar cannot be removed, the next kind office is to conceal it.

And is Jesus deficient in these offices of tender allowance? He never weighs an offence, but with it he weighs the violence of the temptation, and the stratagem of the occasion. "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" such was the kind excuse he made for his slumbering disciples. So benign, so gracious is the friendship of Christ; so answerable to our wants; so suitable to our frailties.

3. Another privilege of friendship is *sympathy in grief*. Sorrow, thus communicated becomes less; and like a stream, loses itself in many channels.

And is not Christ that merciful High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities? What was our Saviour's life but one continued sympathy? The cause of his coming was his compassion of fallen man. At one time, he raises his eyes to heaven at the sight of some afflicted petitioner: at another, his pity is excited by the dearth under which the wretched multitudes were labouring: at another, his soul is

touched with religious compassion for his flock wandering without guide or shepherd : at another, he blends his tears with those of unhappy sisters at the grave of their brother : at another, he cannot refrain from tears, while contemplating Jerusalem on the brink of ruin.

4. Another privilege of friendship is a *communication of secrets*. Thus St. James tells us that Abraham was called "*the friend of God*;" in allusion to the passage, "And the Lord said, *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I go to do?*" Thus we read God spoke to Moses, "as a man *speaketh to his friend*."

If God maintained such intimacies with those whom he loved under the Law ; shall there not be greater advantage under the Gospel ?—" *Unto you*" (says our Lord to his disciples) "*it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God ; but unto others, in parables.*" "*Many prophets and righteous men have desired to hear these things which ye hear ; and have not heard them.*"—" *I call you not servants ; but friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*"

5. One great advantage of friendship is *counsel and advice*. When a man is perplexed with opposite contrarieties of things ; what a blessing it is to derive aid from a second person whose judgment may be greater than our own, and whose benevolent interest is not less. In this case, the interposition of a friend is like the timely arrival of succours to a besieged city, on the point of surrendering.

Christ is not deficient in this office of a friend. Among the titles which Isaiah ascribes to the Messiah, is *Counsellor*. Every true believer may comfort himself in this high privilege, that Christ in whom dwell *all the treasures of wisdom*, never leaves his disciples perplexed and bewildered, when the welfare of their souls requires a better judgment than their own, to guide them in their duty, and to disentangle them from temptation.

6. The last and crowning quality of friendship is *constancy*. But how few there are who can reach the height of so great a virtue ! Too often nothing more is wanting than a mere caprice, the slightest misconception, the smallest grain of jealousy or envy, to plant the bitterest enmity in the place of what appeared the strictest union.

But whom Christ loves, "*he loves unto the end*:" and that end was the end of his life. He died for his friends ; and even

their unworthiness was a motive for his dying in their behalf. On his cross we read, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man *lay down his life* for his friend." That friend still lives: he will receive our parting spirits; and bind us to himself in the bonds of an eternal friendship.

That blessed period has not yet arrived: still are we languishing in a land of exile and separation. But Christ hath left us a criterion, whereby we may prove the sincerity of our love: "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" Friendship is a compact between two. Christ insists on our obedience as a return of friendship: and it is presumption to claim the privilege, whilst we wilfully indulge in any one instance of disobedience. (DEAN SOUTH.)

§ 17. Christ consoles his disciples against the hatred and persecutions which awaited them. JOHN, xv. 17-25: *THESE things I inculcate upon you, that ye love one another*: and the rather, as ye will be exposed to persecution. 18. Yet, *if ye find the world hate you*, ye need not be offended or surprised: for *ye know that it hated me* your Master and Lord, *before it hated you*.

19. Moreover, ye should consider that *if*, in doctrine and practice, *ye had been of the world, the world would have loved and caressed its own* for conforming to it: *but because*, in actions and dispositions, *ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world*, to oppose its vices and to introduce a pure religion; *upon this account the world will hate you*.

[In several passages of our Lord's valedictory address, the word *world* seems to denote the unbelieving Jews, who reviled, persecuted, and rejected him.]

20. But to reconcile you to your persecutions, *remember the word which I spake to you* (Matt. x. 24; Luke, vi. 40), *The servant is not greater than his Master*, and cannot expect better treatment. *If, therefore, they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have observed my word, they will also observe yours*: they will not regard you with a greater attention than me.

21. *But all these things*, all this hatred and contempt, *will they do unto you*, not from want of evidence, but solely on my

account, and for your attachment to me; *because they are ignorant of the purposes of him who sent me.*

22. But they cannot plead this ignorance as an excuse. *If I had not come in the way which I have come, and spoken plainly unto them, they would comparatively have had no sin in rejecting me: but now they have no excuse for their sin.* Yea, this sin is a rebellion against God: for, 23, *he that hateth and opposeth me, hateth and opposeth my Father also.* 24. *If I had not done among them such miracles, as no other man, not even Moses and the prophets had done, they had not, comparatively, had sin: but now they have seen the miracles, and yet hated both me who performed them, and my Father who sent me to perform them.* 25. *And thus may be applied to me the word which is written in that part of the Scriptures termed the Law (Ps. lxi. 4), 'They have hated me without a cause.'* (See Isa. liii. 3-9.)

THE immediate design of our Lord in this scripture, is to open to his immediate disciples, (and, in them to his suffering Saints, in all ages of the Church on earth) the sources of divine consolation under the burden of persecution; and thereby to establish in their hearts the principle of faithful endurance.

1. The storm of unmerited persecution is a grievous calamity. But it is no mean consolation that we share in the sufferings and glory of Christ. *The servant is not greater than his Lord: if they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also.* How hard soever persecution may bear upon us, it must, as to the disciples formerly, so now to every good man, be a mighty consolation, that the same malice and scorn, the same difficulties and sufferings, fell upon the Son of God; and that, in this respect, the great Author and Captain of our salvation did not disdain to become our leader and pattern. No followers of this Master ought to think it strange, if they find no better regard from men than He did: they have no reason to repine when called to suffer, what He hath felt and submitted to before them. For what is the best and greatest of the sons of men, in comparison of this Eternal Son of God? Shall we be enraged and impatient under affronts and outrage, when the majesty of the Holy One was traduced and blasphemed, buffeted and spit upon,

scourged and crucified? Shall we be discontented, and think that measure hard which was meted to the Holy Jesus?

And where is now that world which persecuted Christ? And what was it able to do, but only to promote his glory, and advance his designs? The world which is present, will have the same portion: and we shall partake of the glory of Christ, if with him, and in reference to his honour, we are now suffering the hatred of the world.

2. Another motive for patience under persecution is, that it implies our zeal for labouring to remain firm in allegiance to God; and thus furnishes us with hope of being in the path of duty. It is a necessary alternative, either we must not be the servants of Christ, or else we must be hated and persecuted by the world. We ought always to have this maxim in our minds, as a preservative against any fears of what the world can inflict upon us. It is the truth which is the occasion of all the persecutions raised by carnal men. Let us, therefore, bear the hatred of the world; since it is a means whereby we may be assured that we are not of the world; that we do not follow its maxims; and are not guided by its spirit. Whenever the world forces us to separate ourselves from it, or hates us because we do it, we have a certain sign that God loves us with that eternal love, by which he chooses us from the corrupt mass of mankind. Infinitely happy is he, whom it costs nothing more than the friendship of the world, in purchasing the friendship of Christ. To be of the world, and to be a Christian; to be a Christian, and yet be loved by the world; these are two propositions utterly irreconcilable with the Gospel. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

3. If fresh motive were wanting for patience under persecution, it might be derived, though not without much painful thought, and with much Christian compassion, from contemplating the spiritual danger of our persecutors; acting under (1) the sinful impulse of wilful obstinacy; and (2) manifesting their hatred of God.

1. The opposition of the Jews to the claims of our Lord was founded on wilful obstinacy. Our Lord, therefore, uses the language of remonstrance: "*If I had not done among them, in*

their own country, and before their own eyes, *such works as no other man ever did, they had not had sin*: their unbelief and enmity had been excusable by urging that my word was not to be credited, if not otherwise confirmed." But our Lord had not failed in this important part of evidence. Miracles are the credentials which ought to be exhibited by those who assert themselves to be messengers from God. The more new and extraordinary any mission is, the more reason have we to reject it, if new and extraordinary miracles do not prove it to be of God. Jesus himself did not think fit that his miracles of charity, meekness, and humility, should, of themselves, oblige men to receive him. That man puts his salvation into the hands of an impostor, by believing a new apostle without miracles: but on the other side, he shuts his ears against the voice of God, who does not yield to the evidence of miracles by which alone God can speak to men. In this respect, Christ gave every assurance which the Jews had exacted. *What sign shewest thou, that thou doest these things?* His miracles were those which the Jewish prophets had ascribed as seals of the coming Messiah. They had been made the subject of the most rigid and malignant scrutiny. (John, ix.) *They were such as never man did*, in their history: Moses and Elijah wrought miracles as servants of Jehovah: but Jesus, as a son, by his own divine power. His miracles from those who had subjected them even to the test of sense, drew forth the sincere confession, "*This is the divine person who was to come into the world.*"

2. And what is the real origin of this wilful obstinacy? Alas! how little do many persons think that in opposing and rejecting the doctrine of Christ, their opposition springs from determined enmity to the holy character, authority, law, and worship of Jehovah. Thus it was with the Jews who *saw and hated both the Son of God and the Father who sent him*. Thus it is at this day, with many who have the Scriptures in their hands, the evidences of their divine original clearly set before them; whose guilt is thus exceedingly aggravated, and *they have no cloke for their sins*; because their deeds are evil; and their whole disposition and conduct are diametrically opposite to his holy truth and precepts. The good or evil which is done to Christ, reaches even God himself. To affront an ambassador, is an indignity offered to the prince whom he represents. He

that hateth me, hateth my Father also. It is no other than to hate God, for a man to refuse to obey him, and, by persecution, to oppose the establishment of his kingdom and religion; because to do this, is to declare himself an enemy to his glory which depends upon that establishment. The expression "*to hate God*" raises horror: and more still, "*to hate him without a cause.*" And yet we certainly hate him, when we oppose his law and government: for what cause can there possible be to hate a God who is goodness and holiness?

But the opposition which the Gospel brings along with it, is nothing when compared with those blessings which it confers on all true believers. If the sufferings and afflictions were a thousand times greater than they are, we ought to esteem the precious pearl the happy purchase at any rate. Much less let us suffer ourselves to be jested out of attachment to our Master's Gospel, which has no enemies who are worthy to be its friends; and which would not fail to be more beloved in proportion as it was less holy, less pure, less sanctifying in its effects. (QUESNEL, chiefly.)

§ 18. Meanings of the term "Paraclete." JOHN, xv. 26, 27: *BUT when the Comforter is come, whom, after my ascension, I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall bear testimony to me by his miraculous gifts; 27. And ye also shall bear witness to my actions and doctrines, because ye have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.*

THE language relative to the Holy Spirit is manifestly personal: *He—the Comforter—the Spirit of Truth—is sent—comes—bears witness—*; as in other places, he is said, to *hear—speak—command—forbid.*

The word *Comforter*, is, in the original Greek, termed *Paraclete*. In explanation of this word, commentators assign the various senses of Comforter, Instructor or Monitor, Intercessor, Advocate.

As the Messiah was known among the Jews by the title of *Menahem* or *Comforter*; this, probably, may be the primary sense of the word, in our Saviour's present address; but not to

the exclusion of the other interpretations ; which are very significantly implied in the word *Paraclete*.

The disciples, in the absence of their Master, would stand in extreme need of a *Comforter*. They were left destitute of his personal encouragement, and were successors to the malice and hatred by which he had been assailed. This state called for some more than ordinary powers to sustain and confirm their hearts, and to reconcile them to the hardships in which their duty involved them. This was to be effected by supplying them with heavenly and unseen succours ; thus overpowering temptations which threatened their overthrow ; and re-inforcing a nature weak, frail, and likely to sink under the repeated shocks of terror, danger, and merciless persecution. In all these regards, the Holy Spirit exerted his divine influences, and did really approve himself, in the most eminent manner and in the most literal sense, a *Comforter*. Thus when persecution drove Paul and Barnabas from Antioch, the disciples were filled *with joy* and with the *Holy Ghost* (Acts, xiii. 52). Thus the affliction in which the Thessalonians received the Gospel, was compensated by *the joy of the Holy Ghost* (1 Thess. i. 6).

2. The word *Paraclete* denotes *Intercessor*. To this office, St. Paul alludes when he says (Rom. viii.) that "The Spirit maketh *intercession* for the Saints, with their groanings which cannot be uttered, and according to the will of God." This passage is usually understood of those graces, by which the Holy Spirit disposes the hearts of good men to pray in such a manner, with a zeal so fervent, with a will so resigned to the providence and wisdom of God, as conciliate success and acceptance. In this meaning of the word, the *Paraclete* procures favour and access for those, whose unworthiness debarred them from approach to God. Thus we, in ourselves sinful and impure, stand in need not only of our Saviour's mediation in praying to the Father for us ; but we also need the assistances of the Holy Spirit enabling us to pray acceptably to the Father. These assistances justify our addresses, and render that a throne of grace and love, of gentleness and pity, of clemency and condescension. For otherwise, it would be inaccessible, a seat of judgment and stern justice ; a place, at which no man's application could find favourable entertainment ; because, if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, no flesh living could be

justified in his sight. So necessary was it even for the apostles, so much more necessary is it for us, to enjoy the benefits and kind offices of this heavenly *Paraclete*, according to the notion of that title, as it denotes an *Intercessor*.

3. There is a third sense and very considerable one, employed as *Advocate* in assisting clients in the pleading of their cause. And this, not by arguing the whole point for them (as with us now is most usual), but by instructing the party himself in arguments proper for him to urge in his own defence; and at the day of hearing, encouraging him to speak boldly; suggesting proper matter; and prompting him with so much care and prudence, that nothing material or useful should escape him. Of this assistance, the apostles had very great need. They were entering into controversy with a whole world at once: a controversy, which, so far as their own endowments, natural or acquired, were concerned, they, of all men breathing, were least qualified to manage or maintain. Upon this account, our Lord commands them to rely entirely upon the watchfulness and wisdom of a heavenly Monitor: one, who would not fail them in their greatest extremities; but without any study or eloquence of their own, be sure to order matters so, that they should come off with honour; and their enemies, with shame and confusion. "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for in that same hour, it shall be given you, what ye shall speak. I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of my Father which speaketh in you."

And such effects as these, were the testimony which the Spirit is said to bear concerning Christ; the extraordinary gifts and powers, plainly of Divine original. To these St. Paul applies that of the Psalmist, "Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and given *gifts* unto men," so making the liberal effusions of those days answer to the distributions usual at the solemn inaugurations and triumphs of princes. And such was the glorious entry made by our Lord into heaven; a solemnizing his conquest over Death, and Hell, and every enemy; a taking full possession of his kingdom. Of that enthroning, the Holy Ghost, shed abroad according to his pro-

mise, was a convincing demonstration; and an instance of the power and truth of him by whom he was given. It was an evidence, how dear those persons and their cause were to God: in vindication whereof this gift was, in so plentiful and astonishing a manner, received; and, consequently, how safely all their doctrines and reports might be depended upon, who brought such credentials of their veracity.

4. Nor was the *Paraclete* wanting to the apostles, in his office of *Monitor* and *Instructor*. In their laborious ministry, many occasions would necessarily arise, in which the sagacity of the serpent was wanting to the simplicity of the dove; and where a wisdom from above was needed to counteract the machinations from beneath; so that the Gospel might be forwarded in the most prudent manner. By the *instruction* of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were illuminated in the appointment of labourers in the ministry; so that they were enabled to say in confidence and with authority, "Take heed unto the flocks, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you over-seers." The Holy Spirit suggested to the apostles the occasions, on which they might use their miraculous powers discreetly. This heavenly instruction is dated from the day of Pentecost, when the light of fiery tongues was an emblem of the clear knowledge then communicated.

Since the ordinary assistances of the Holy Spirit are promised to the faithful in all ages, and are fully commensurate to our spiritual wants; let us labour to purify our hearts from evil affections, that we may receive the benefits of his holy communications. Then shall we experience his intercession in our words of prayer; his guidance, in doubts; his consolation, in sorrow; his instruction, in all necessary truths. (STANHOPE.)

§ 19. Testimony of the Spirit. JOHN, xv. 26: *THE Spirit of truth shall testify of me.*

AMONG the many benevolent offices of the Holy Spirit in the scheme of redemption, is to testify outwardly as well as inwardly, the certainty of our religion. Let us direct our thoughts to the former part of his testimony.

St. John has pronounced that "*the spirit of prophecy is the*

testimony of Jesus." Frequent and powerful, therefore, is this testimony on the part of the Holy Spirit who in every generation, from the fall of Adam to the time of Malachi, enabled the prophets, in various times and in various parcels, to announce some particular expressive of the promised Messiah, in character, ministry, and office.

When the fulness of the time had come, the next operation of the Holy Spirit was the supernatural conception of the Saviour. He afterwards descended, like a dove, at his baptism, and led him to triumph in the wilderness. (Matt. iv. 1.) The Messiah's mighty works which bore witness of his office, are represented as repeated testimonies of the Spirit, by Christ himself, when preaching at Nazareth (Luke, iv. 18); and in a subsequent controversy with the Jews, he declares, "If I, by *the Spirit* of God, cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come unto you." St. Peter says, "That God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Spirit* and with power." (Acts, x. 37.) To the same *Spirit of Holiness*, St. Paul ascribes our Lord's resurrection (Rom. i. 4); and St. Peter, his being quickened. (1 Eph. iii. 18.)

But the most remarkable testimony of the Holy Spirit was his descent upon the apostles, subsequently to our Lord's ascension. This visible interposition was indeed a testimony to the righteousness of Christ; and proved that though he had been crucified as a malefactor, yet God had now publicly ratified his innocence. Some persons affected to ridicule the miracle which they could not disprove: but for a refutation of all doubt it sufficed, that the foreigners, present at the day of Pentecost, must know whether the languages they heard, were real ones; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem must have known whether they who spoke them, had ever learnt them. The result was not that they were detected, but that three thousand souls were added to them the same day. (Acts, ii. 41-47.)

Again, it is an acknowledged fact, that Christianity spread in a very few years through every nation then known. Now by what possible means could a faith, so entirely opposite to the established superstitions of all countries, and the favourite vices of all the inhabitants of them, be thus propagated, in an inquisitive age, by a handful of men, without learning and without power, against all the learning and power of the world, vigorously and

without delay applied to withstand it,—but by such testimonies of the Divine Spirit in its favour, as the first Christians unanimously say attended its progress? These afford a clear explication of this wonderful change; and fair enquiry will show, that nothing else can. Either the Gospel prevailed by these miracles; or its prevailing without them was the most amazing miracle of all.

But besides this way of reasoning, to prove that there must have been such gifts, we have direct historical evidence, that there actually were such. Repeated mention of them occurs in “The Acts of the Apostles;” the work of an author who lived at that time; and was allowed, by those who must know, to have written truth. But the argument from St. Paul’s epistles appears to be somewhat stronger: in them he mentions frequently the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, as then subsisting in those churches: he would not have dared to do this, had there been no such thing; or his letters could never have been respected, as they certainly were.

And now what remains is, that, being satisfied of the certainty of these things, we lay seriously to heart the proper inferences from them. In general it follows, that the religion which we profess, is no other than the truth of God; the doctrines of it, however mysterious, reasonable objects of firm belief; the precepts, however difficult, matter of indispensable duty; its glorious rewards, secure to every good person; its dreadful punishments, unavoidable by every bad one. More particularly, in regard to that Spirit, which *testifies* these things, it follows that we should honour him, as possessed of those divine attributes which the Scripture ascribes to him; that we should make our thankful acknowledgments for his outward manifestations, and pray for his inward and saving influences on our souls; that we should receive the Gospel submissively, and obey it diligently, often recollecting for this purpose that awful admonition: “If the word spoken by angels,” the law of Moses, “was steadfast, and every transgression received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and *with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*” (Heb. ii. 2–4.) (ARCHBISHOP SECKER.)

§ 20. Christ warns his disciples of the sufferings which they must expect. JOHN, xvi. 1-4: *THESE things I have spoken to you in relation to your subsequent trials, that ye may not, considering yourselves deceived by my silence, be offended and tempted to renounce your profession. 2. They shall indeed excommunicate and cast you out of their synagogues: yea, the hour is coming, that whosoever killeth you, shall think that he offereth an acceptable sacrifice to God. 3. And these things they will do unto you, because they have not known the nature, perfections, and purposes of God my Father; nor, in consequence, me his Son, and their Messiah. 4. But I have spoken these things to you and fore-warned you, that when the time for suffering comes, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

THIS prediction of future sufferings was fulfilled in terrible accomplishment. Not St. Paul only experienced its truth, when forty Jews were banded together by oath to kill him; but he and all his fellow-labourers might say, "We are accounted as sheep to be slain." They were not only excommunicated and despoiled of goods; but murdered on the pretence of promoting the honour of God. A similar excuse for barbarity has been urged in more modern times, not by Gentile Cæsars, but by those whose brows have been bound by mitres. These *ignorant* zealots — (for what is zeal unguided by knowledge?) — then most considered themselves the faithful ministers of Christ, when their hands were most deeply immersed in the blood of his worthiest servants.

The prediction of Jesus leads us to consider the vile nature and the pernicious effects of religious persecution.

1. First; It is not a probable way to make men good.

If we would serve God in an acceptable manner, it is requisite that we know the will of God, and that we pay him a cheerful obedience. When the first of these is wanting, there can be no religion; and when any act of religion is performed with reluctance and aversion, it is the service of a beast, rather than of a man; it is only a bodily action, in which the mind hath no share. This evidently shows, that compulsion can have no good influence. For what is the pretended design of persecution? It is to instruct and reclaim from error. But bonds and imprisonment, fines and stripes, racks and gibbets, will not inspire

the art of reasoning justly, nor will they cause a doctrine or system to seem more probable or more amiable to the suffering person, than it appeared before he was punished.

2. Persecution is contrary to the spirit of Christianity. The religion of our Saviour is a religion like its author, full of humanity, lenity, and universal benevolence. Though he preached the Gospel in vain to many persons, whose unbelief (he knew) proceeded from a corrupted heart, he neither called down fire from heaven to consume them, nor sent legions of angels to dragoon them. To their obstinacy and malice, he only opposed acts of kindness, and miracles, and arguments, and exhortations, and reproofs. He sent forth his apostles into the world, not to persecute, but to be persecuted; and to establish the worship of God by such methods as himself had employed. It is not to be imagined, that, out of the mouth which said, "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye *love* one another," could proceed an order to exercise all sorts of *cruelty* upon men for their errors in religion.

3. The consequence of supposing persecution to be recommended by the Gospel, is that all sects of Christians would have the same call to plague and destroy those who differ from them. All sects of Christians are the true Church, in their own opinion; and would apply such a commission to themselves, as their right or their duty.

It is easy to imagine what would be the consequence of a general persuasion amongst Christians, that men ought to be destroyed, if they refused to forsake their errors, what mutual hatred, cruelty, uncharitableness, malice, and revenge, would everywhere abound.

4. It is very strange that Christians in these latter ages, can find the doctrine of persecution so plainly laid down in the New Testament, when the first Christians could see no such thing there. The earlier Christian writers are professed enemies to persecution; make very ingenious and severe remarks upon the inhuman behaviour of the Pagans; and reason most justly upon the liberty which every man ought to enjoy, of following the dictates of his conscience in matters of religion; whilst, in all things lawful, he obeys the civil magistrate, and is a good and useful subject.

Since persecution is not a probable way to make men good ; since it is so opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, and so terrible in its consequences, that if it were universally practised, it must end in the subversion of Christianity ; it evidently follows, that if it be permitted in the Scriptures, the permission should be contained in terms strong, plain, express, positive, very easy to be understood, like the precepts which require piety, charity, and justice. But that is not the case. The expression in the Parable (Luke, xiv. 23), "*Compel* them to come in," means nothing more than the use of entreaties, earnest importunity, arguments, promises, and other moral motives. In this very parable, one of those who were invited, excuses himself, and says, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I *must needs* go and see it." The word in the original is the same with that in verse 23, "I am *compelled* to go and see it."

Persecutors affirm that it is good to punish men who are in error, to put them upon an examination of facts and reasons, which else they would not have considered. On the contrary, this is not a proper way to make men examine ; for he who examines any point, particularly any point of religion, ought to be free from passion and prejudice. That punishment tends to bias the judgment, is too clear to admit a dispute.

We may also observe that in every religious sect, erring or not erring in points of faith, three sorts of men are to be found ; first, persons who look upon all religion with much indifference, and are outwardly of that to which chance or custom hath joined them ; secondly, persons who are sincere in their profession, but have too great an affection for the things of this life ; and thirdly, persons who are resolved to suffer all things rather than act contrary to the dictates of their conscience. Now the first sort will probably comply without hesitation, for all Churches are alike to them. The second sort, intimidated by punishments, will pretend to be converted, and still retain their errors. The last will perish, rather than basely dissemble, and will be confessors and martyrs, in their own opinion at least. Thus the persecutors will furnish their Church with atheists and hypocrites, and destroy the best and worthiest men.

Persecutors object also, that by indulgence, heresies are propagated to the eternal destruction of those who are deluded ;

and that, therefore, the utmost rigour is true Christian charity; and, by the punishment of a few, saves many from everlasting misery.

One of the most odious and pernicious doctrines of the Church of Rome is, that all who separate themselves from her, are in a state of damnation. A man may worship a piece of wood, or a piece of bread; he may think that the same body can be present in ten thousand places at once; and yet he may love his neighbour as himself: but this uncharitable notion hath a plain tendency to make a man more savage than a brute, to all who dissent from him. Hence ariseth hatred of those, who are supposed to be hated of God; hence those tribunals of iniquity called *Inquisitions*; hence plots and assassinations; hence violating all faith, and making a jest of all oaths, and treaties, and solemn promises; hence equivocations and mental reservations; hence the forcing away children from parents, and wives from husbands, and any oppression which tends to the blessed end of extirpating heresy. This end sanctifies all villanies; all is done out of mere compassion for the souls of men, and piety towards God; a diabolical compassion, and a piety worse than profaneness.

While we carefully avoid this wicked and unchristian spirit of persecution; let us beware of an opposite extreme, the spirit of contradiction, and the love of novelty and singularity; with which whosoever is smitten, is ever framing new systems of religion and morality, and not able to conceal any of his awkward inventions.

Happy and wise is he who can keep at a proper distance from both extremes. He esteems the Gospel to be the greatest blessing which God hath conferred upon us; he carefully endeavours to understand and to practise it, and to recommend it to others. Acts of civility and humanity he exerciseth towards all; but avoids the society of those, who in their conversation and behaviour, shew a disregard to God, to truth, to probity, and to religion.

Of all moral qualities, the most valuable is piety; the next to it is prudence; and they must be joined together; for piety without prudence may become enthusiasm and bigotry; and prudence without piety sinks into knavish craft. (JORTIN.)

§ 21. Jesus consoles his disciples by the promise of sending the Holy Ghost. JOHN, xvi. 4-11: AND indeed *I did not so fully say these things to you from the beginning of my ministry, because I was with you*; and could answer your enquiries, and bear the chief assaults of our enemies; 5, *but now I am going my way to him who sent me*; and opportunity of personal communication will soon cease: *and yet none of you, availing yourselves of this short interval, now asks me, 'Whither goest thou?' but because I have spoken to you these things relative to my departure, sorrow has filled your heart, and prevents you from questioning me concerning the nature of my future abode, and from rejoicing in my exaltation.* 7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is even advantageous for you that I depart: for if I do not depart, and pass through my sufferings into glory, the Comforter will not come to you in the covenant of redemption: my ascension must precede his descent. But if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

8. *And when he shall have come, he will convince, and furnish proof to, the world respecting sin, and respecting righteousness, and respecting judgment:*

[The word *world*, in our Lord's address, seems occasionally to denote *the Jewish nation*. See xvi. 30; xvii. 9, 14.]

9. He will convince the world *respecting sin*; the sin of their unbelief, when many shall be pricked in their hearts; and when, by his aid, ye shall work many miracles. (Acts, ii. 37, 41.)

10. He shall convince the world *respecting my righteousness and innocence: because I depart to my Father, and ye see me no more on earth*. The Holy Spirit, by being shed forth in pursuance of my Father's promise, will attest the reality of my ascension and my permanent exaltation to the right hand of a holy God; who could not thus manifestly sanction an impostor.

11. He shall convince the world *respecting judgment; because the prince of this world will, by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit attesting the doctrine of the apostles, be shown to be judged and condemned to be despoiled of his usurped empire over mankind*.

[v. 11: *Judgment*: power to judge mine enemies: BURTON. Divine judgment in the punishment of an incredulous nation: CAMPBELL. Of a last judgment in which sentence shall be passed upon all men: VALPY. The policy of rulers of this world, in

opposing me, shall be judged and condemned:—The false judgment of the Jews in condemning the Messiah : A. CLARKE. The divine judgment against all, whether Jews or heathens, who persisted in rejecting Jesus as their Saviour : BLOOMFIELD.]

IN these words of Jesus Christ, there is an evident allusion to the office of a *pleader*, in a court of judicature. Our Lord virtually affirms, that though he might be arraigned, condemned, and punished by his enemies ; yet his celestial Advocate, the Holy Spirit, would fully assert his innocence, and enforce a due punishment upon his false accusers.

Let us, first, consider in what manner this prediction was fulfilled in reference to its more immediate occasion ; and, secondly, let us apply the words to our own particular and personal instruction.

1. First, our Lord promises his disciples that the Jews would be convinced *respecting sin*, in rejecting him as the promised Messiah. The fulfilment of this promise commenced, when, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter concluded his discourse, in these words : " Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." By his convincing words, the hearers of the apostle were so pricked in their hearts, that three thousand were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. From this period the progress of the Gospel was so rapid, that in less than thirty years, churches were founded in various parts of the Roman empire. But what especially demands our consideration is this ; that in embracing the cause of Jesus, the converts were exposed to contempt, poverty, persecution, and even death itself. To this hideous variety of suffering, what rational persons would have subjected themselves, unless they had dreaded the anger of God, for the *sin of unbelief*?

But what was the source of this conviction ? It was the Holy Spirit, the Advocate ; who " descended on the day of Pentecost in the likeness of fiery tongues, lighting upon the apostles to teach them, and to lead them to all truth ; giving them both the gift of divers languages, and also boldness with fervent zeal, constantly to preach the Gospel unto all nations." It was the Holy Spirit who in the ministry of the apostles, exhibited many miraculous testimonies of their divine mission :

and, as in the case of Lydia, *opened the hearts* of the hearers, dissipating their prejudices, and leading their thoughts captive to Christ.

2. Secondly, the Holy Spirit came, as Advocate, to convince the world respecting *righteousness*; inasmuch as "Christ had gone to the Father, and his disciples saw him no more." "Christ" (says St. Paul) "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." St. John observes (vii. 39) that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, inasmuch as Jesus was not yet glorified." It may therefore be urged, that Jesus must have been glorified, inasmuch as the Spirit was given. St. Peter accordingly remarks to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, "This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses: therefore, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." By such testimony was it proved, that Christ had been holy, and innocent, and righteous; and therefore unjustly condemned.

3. Lastly, the Holy Spirit came as Advocate to convince the world respecting *judgment*, because the prince of this world is judged. By *the prince of this world* is denoted Satan; who at that time, was possessing the empire of the world by the homage which was rendered to him under various shapes and appellations; and by the darkness of ignorance and corruption which he had diffused over the hearts and intellects of all his worshippers. Already had Christ triumphed over this enemy of the Church, in the Temptation subsequent to his baptism: but a more marked defeat was now at hand. Thus Jesus, speaking of his approaching death, had said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." And did not Christ, by his death, destroy him that had the power of death? (Heb. ii. 11.) Then was the ancient prophecy fulfilled, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."

And here again, the operations of the Holy Spirit may be clearly traced. His quickening energy brought to the remembrance of the apostles whatever Christ had said to them: so that in rousing the Gentiles from the lethargy of sin, it was not so much the apostles who exhorted, as the Holy Ghost who

spoke in the apostles. It was the Holy Spirit who opened the hearts of the Gentiles for the reception of God's word; and excited them to act conformably to it. It was the Holy Spirit who helped the infirmities of the first converts, and bore witness with their conscience, that from children of wrath they had become the children of God. By this efficacy, the world was convinced in respect of *judgment*. Satan, the prince of this world, was judged. He had been (as it were) arraigned before the tribunal of holiness; he was condemned as a criminal; and by the mightier power of the Holy Spirit, would be gradually expelled from his usurped dominion over mankind.

II. Let us apply to ourselves these three purposes of the Holy Spirit's advent.

1. If he came to reprove and convict of *sin*, men must have been, by nature, in a state of condemnation, and the children of wrath. Let us, therefore, walk humbly before God; gratefully acknowledging, that what we are by baptism into his Church, we are not by our own merits, but by his gratuitous mercy.

2. Did the Holy Spirit come to convince the world concerning *righteousness*? Let us be made sensible that the righteousness of Christ is the only mode of justifying sinners; and that a true faith in that righteousness is inseparably accompanied with humility, with the love of God, and with hatred of sin.

3. Did the Holy Spirit come to convince the world concerning *judgment*? If, then, a day be fixed for the condemnation of the reprobate, let us labour, by penitence and active faith, to conciliate the favour of our Judge supreme: for who can stand before his dread tribunal, in a state of impenitence?

Lastly: When Christ announced to his disciples, that he was *going his way* to the Father who had sent him, their hearts were filled with sorrow. And yet this much-dreaded departure became the triumph of the Church, and the salvation of the human race. In like manner, if we could duly appreciate the assurances of Christ, we should feel that all separations from our dearest friends are ordered for some great spiritual benefit. It is *expedient* for them to rest from their labours, and to repose with their God. It is expedient for us, that we may be weaned from this world. They were strangers and pilgrims who (we hope) have now arrived at their true home. Whatever are the

links of the purest earthly union, they must be broken, that they may be indissoluble in a better existence. The thought of that purified and enduring love should encourage us to say with Christ, "*It is expedient that I go away. I am in a great strait, even as Paul, between two : my friends and children, tenderly do I love you ; but to depart, to be with Christ, is far better.*" God grant that such a portion of grace may be vouchsafed, as shall awaken these Christian feelings on our death-bed. Then shall we depart as hopeful harbingers of those dear friends whom, for a little while, we leave behind on earth. So shall we advance, strong in faith, to rejoin that Saviour, who has gone to open to all true disciples the many mansions of his Father's house. (Du Bosc.)

§ 22. Christ promises to his disciples the especial and full instructions of the Holy Spirit. JOHN, xvi. 12-15 : I HAVE *yet many things to say unto you* [concerning the call of the Gentiles, the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, and the full nature of the Christian dispensation], *but ye cannot bear and comprehend them now* ; while your minds are not sufficiently free from prejudices, to receive such instructions. 13. *But when he, even the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all the truth*, essential for the duties of your apostleship : *for he will not speak of himself*, as if he proposed any separate end or counsel, opposed to the Father ; *but whatsoever he shall hear and receive in charge, that he shall reveal ; and he will shew you things to come*, that your predictions may be a lasting testimony to the truth of my Gospel. [Acts, xi. 28 ; 1 Tim. iv. 1-3 ; 2 Pet. i. 14 ; Revelations, whole book.]

14. *He shall glorify me*, and promote my honour : *for the Holy Spirit shall receive of mine*, even the truth which relates to my person, office, and doctrine ; *and shall discover it to you and to the minds of all in whom he resides*. 15. And indeed *all things whatsoever the Father hath*, all his perfections and attributes, *are mine* : mine is the fulness necessary to effect my Father's purposes in redemption : *in reference to this, I said, The Spirit of truth shall take of mine, and reveal it unto you my disciples*.

What those things probably were, which our Saviour did not, at that time, reveal to his disciples, might be instanced in three particulars.

1. Our Saviour designed his kingdom to be spiritual ; and its laws not to be enforced by the sword of the magistrate, but by sanctions built upon our hopes of a better world.

Against this truth, the disciples were prejudiced by the general tradition, that the Messiah would manifest himself to the Jews in military splendour, and reduce the Gentiles under their dominion. The disciples were so possessed with this fond conceit of a temporal kingdom, that immediately after our Lord had plainly foretold his sufferings, James and John petitioned for places of honour. Even after his sufferings, the two disciples, journeying to Emmaus, trusted that it had been he who would have redeemed Israel ; and when he was on the point of his ascension, the disciples still cherished the hope that he would restore the kingdom to Israel. (Acts, i. 6.) But after the descent of the Holy Ghost in his miraculous gifts, they were capable of understanding and receiving a truth, against which their national pride had closed their hearts.

2. Another truth was the abrogation of the Jewish dispensation. As the Law had been given by God, they considered it not as a temporary, but perpetual institution. But, in the council at Jerusalem, the apostles released the Gentiles from the observance of the ceremonial yoke ; because it so seemed good to the *Holy Ghost* and to them. (Acts, xv. 28.)

3. Another truth was, that the salvation of the Messiah belonged to the Gentiles. The Jews regarded the heathens with the haughtiest contempt, as wholly debarred from the promises of God. Though our Lord, previously to his ascension, had given his apostles an express command to teach all nations, yet it appears from the history of Cornelius, that they had not comprehended the full extent of their commission. But after the vision to Peter, and when they saw that the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles as upon them, then they were instructed in this great truth.

These truths are, probably, in reference to the Jewish prejudices of the disciples, among the communications, which during our Saviour's earthly ministry, they would reluctantly receive. But an enquiry of this nature is the less necessary,

inasmuch as the following words of our Lord,—“He shall guide you into all *THE* truth,”—are an assurance unto us, that the Holy Spirit would instruct the disciples in the whole counsel of God, in the truth as it is in Jesus; in short, that the Holy Spirit would impart *all* knowledge, necessary for evangelical discipline, both in doctrine and in precept. It is certain, therefore, that the apostles, in compiling the canon of Scripture, were so assisted by the Holy Spirit, as to write all truths necessary for the salvation of believers; and consequently, that all things necessary to be done and believed by Christians, are fully and perspicuously contained in the Holy Scriptures.

From our Lord's example we learn, that in the arduous duty of reforming and instructing others, we must adopt a prudent caution in combating their prejudices, lest they reject our salutary advice. Even persons who are tractable and willing to learn, may, at first, entertain unawares, from the force of education, some false principles, which, by time and forbearance, may be removed. Some prejudices cannot be plucked out at once; but yet may be so loosened by degrees, that they fall away of themselves; even as some knots may be untied with patience, which by a violent pulling are fixed so much the faster.

This caution was adopted by St. Paul: he tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. iii. 2), “I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were *not able to bear it.*” He was content to instil truth, as they were capable of appreciating. The minds of some men are like narrow-mouthed vessels; into which liquor may be poured by degrees; but if we pour too rapidly, it runs by, and is lost.

But when men are wilful and not of a teachable disposition, then are we bound to urge upon them the things necessary to be known, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. God is not obliged to do more than to offer men sufficient means of conviction: and if, in that case, they resist full and sufficient evidence, they do it at their peril.

Lastly: if the Holy Spirit was sent to lead the disciples into *all the truth*; and if, in consequence, the apostles bequeathed to the Church complete instruction concerning Christian doctrine; these circumstances remove all ground for the pretended infallibility of the Romish Church. Our Lord's words do not convey any especial privilege to the Church of Rome in par-

ticular, and not otherwise than as a *part* of the Christian Church, and in common with other parts. No promise of infallibility was ever made; and it is only so far as she adheres to the doctrine of the apostles, as transmitted in their authentic records, that she can be preserved free from error. Her perversions of true Christian doctrine are sad refutations of her haughty claim. And where is this infallibility to be found? Is it in the Pope or in a general Council, who are often at variance? Where was it, when, for many years, two Popes claimed St. Peter's chair? Is it sanctioned by any express passage in the evangelical writings? Is it inferred from the caution with which St. Paul deemed it necessary to warn the Church of Rome against apostasy? This privilege of infallibility was not claimed until 300 years had elapsed after the death of Christ: and if the Church did well enough for 300 years, without an infallible judge, this is a demonstration that there is no absolute need of it. The promise in the text applies to the revelation of *new* truths: as the Church of Rome does not pretend to any new revelation, she cannot challenge anything by virtue of Christ's promise. We are not bound, by any commands of Christ, to rely implicitly on the decision of any one man who may be termed *Pope*: on the contrary, if every conscientious Christian were not allowed to judge for himself, why are we enjoined to *try the spirits, whether they be of God; and to prove all things*. God is the only infallible Being: to his word let us have recourse. Let others build on Fathers and Popes, on traditions and councils, what they will: but let us continue firm, as we are on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone.

v. 13: "*The Spirit of truth shall GUIDE you into all truth.*"

The expression, *guide into all truth*, seems to give us some means for judging what methods the Holy Spirit usually takes in the ordinary operations of his grace. Not that the particular manner of his working upon our minds, in every case, can be determined: for who is able to express the infinite variety of excellent arts, by which he wins us over to his own heavenly purposes? But, perhaps, we may gather from this expression so much as may preserve us from error, and forward the practice of our duty.

Now the word which we render *to guide*, properly signifies *leading a traveller in the way*. The manner of which is thus explained by Moses ; who, speaking of the Israelites being conducted through the wilderness, says that “ God went before them to search them out a place to pitch their tents in, in fire by night, to shew them by what way they should go, and in a cloud by day.” (Deut. i. 34.) Here we have the office of a guide explained, by “ *shewing the way in which they should go, and going before them in that way.*” Thus was the Angel of God’s presence a guide to the Israelites of old ; and thus is the grace of God’s Spirit a guide to Christians now. He directs them what course to take ; he warns them against the pits and precipices, the difficulties and by-paths, by which, if destitute of such direction, they might wander or perish in their journey : and so he brings them forward in that holiness, of which himself is the perfection and the brightest pattern.

Another interpretation, deduced from this in Scripture, is that of assisting and supporting men in their passage. Thus God is said (Deut. i. 31) to bear those Israelites, “ as a man beareth his own son, in all the way that they went.” The similitude is taken from parents and nurses holding children by the hand, being content to go their slow pace ; and not only guiding, but supporting and guarding them also. Thus are those passages commonly understood, where God is said to have led Abraham throughout all the land of Canaan (Josh. xxiv. 3) ; to lead Joseph like a sheep, and his people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. And thus the Messiah, the Great and True Shepherd, is said gently to lead those that are with young (Is. xl. 11.) This sort of guidance the Holy Spirit performs, when he condescends to our infirmities, accommodates himself to our capacities, and imparts his gifts and graces ; not according to his own fulness and power to give, but in such proportions as the vessels into which they are poured, are qualified to receive them. An instance whereof our Blessed Lord hath left (John, xvi. 12) by omitting to say many things unto his disciples, which they, at that time, were unable to bear.

Hence the word came to be applied to the office of a Master or Teacher. Thus when Philip asked the Ethiopian, Whether he understood that prophecy of Isaiah, which he found him reading (Acts, viii. 31), the answer is, “ How can I, except

some man should *guide* me?" This part of a guide then Philip undertook by divine appointment; and how he discharged it, is manifest from the following account: "The Ethiopian nobleman then said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself? or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth; and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." His guidance then consisted in complying with the nobleman's desire to be better informed; satisfying his enquiries concerning the mysterious meaning of that prophecy; and thence taking occasion to let him, by degrees, into the whole scheme of man's redemption by the sufferings and death of our Saviour Christ.

Such a guide is the Holy Ghost. He enlightens dark eyes; but by such illuminations, as suppose a willingness to see. He leads men into paths of holiness and salvation; but he expects a readiness to follow. He gives ability to perform that which, without him, never could be done; but it is that which will not be done, without our own pains and concurrence. "The *meek* he will guide in judgment, and the *meek* shall he learn his way." (Psalm xxv. 8.) But still they are *meek*. And although he strengthens our weakness, and inspires our dispositions, and assists our endeavours to be good; yet he is nowhere said, by an almighty and irresistible operation, to compel the obstinate, or to drag men along whether they will or no.

Hence it is no difficult matter to reconcile those texts of Scripture, which attribute our sanctification and salvation to *the Word*, with some other passages which ascribe the same effects to *the Spirit of God*. The *Spirit* is the efficient; the *Word* is the instrumental cause. We cannot come to Christ, except we be drawn; and it is his Spirit that draws us; and he draws us by the Word. He gives a new turn to our thoughts and inclinations; disposes us to hearken, to consider, to endeavour; and then he renders those actions and endeavours successful. So that all this is effected by the application of proper means; by seasonable suggestions; by influences so gentle and sweet, that all is done with us and in us. The work is so much the Spirit's, that if we be tractable and willing to do our part, he will not fail to do his: and it is so much our own too, that if we refuse or neglect our part, he will not do it, either for us, or without us. (DEAN STANHOPE.)

§ 23. Equality of Christ with the Father. JOHN, xvi. 15 :
ALL things that the Father hath, are mine.

It would be difficult to find in any of our Lord's discourses, a stronger assertion of his divinity, than is contained in these words. Taken in connexion with what precedes and follows them, they amount to a declaration of his equality with the Father, in one of the highest acts of infinite power and wisdom, — that of imparting spiritual gifts. They imply, also, in their more general signification, an inseparable union and co-operation of the Holy Spirit with the Father and himself, in all that relates to the work of man's salvation.

Throughout this memorable conversation with his apostles, on the eve of his sufferings, our Lord appears exceedingly solicitous to assure them, that his place should be supplied by another Comforter, who though not visibly manifested to them, should give abundant proof of his actual presence, by miraculous signs and tokens; these affording such evidence of his immediate influence upon their understandings and affections, as should leave no room to doubt of the source from which it flowed. The characters which Jesus ascribes to this heavenly Person, are nothing short of attributes essentially divine. He was to 'abide with them for ever;' to 'teach them all things, and to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever he had said unto them.' He was to come unto them 'from the Father;' being the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, to guide them into all the truth, and to shew them things to come.' He is represented also as having the same intimate knowledge of the divine will and counsels as the Son himself. On these high prerogatives our Lord grounds the assurance, that the want of his own personal continuance among them would be amply compensated by the coming of this all-sufficient guide and instructor. Yet great as these characters and prerogatives are, our Lord speaks of himself as equally entitled with the Father to the glory resulting from them: "howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. He shall glorify *me*; for he shall receive of mine: and shall show it unto you. All things things that the *Father* hath, are *mine*: therefore said I, that he

shall take of *mine*, and shew it unto you." In this comprehensive assertion, our Lord clearly assumes to himself, jointly with the Father, whatsoever is done by the Holy Spirit; all the miraculous powers afterwards exercised by the apostles; all the extraordinary as well as the ordinary gifts bestowed on them for the great work of their ministry. Conformably with which assertion, St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, speaks of the wonderful effusion of the Spirit at that time, as the act of Christ himself: "*he* hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Now the greater the characters and attributes here described as appertaining to the Holy Spirit, the greater is the proof hence derived of our Lord's divinity: since he expressly claims the glory of them, in saying that the Comforter whom he was to send, would glorify *him*. Such glory could be due to God alone: therefore Christ is God. Therefore also the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. Whatsoever he receiveth from the Father, he receiveth from the Son also. Whatsoever he imparteth to the world of the divine counsels, he imparteth as in immediate co-operation with the Father and the Son. Hence arises a convincing argument in proof also of the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

Abundant evidence may be collected from these and other declarations, made by our Lord himself, that he was indeed the Son of God, in the fullest extent of that title, as including an essential participation in the Godhead itself. The reason assigned (in the words of this fifteenth verse) for ascribing to himself the gifts and graces bestowed by the Holy Spirit, is indeed decisive on this point: "All things that the Father hath, are *mine*." We cannot imagine a more direct assumption of equality with the Father. However distinct as to personal relationship, if all things that the Father has, are *his*, there cannot be a doubt that both partake of the same nature and perfections. (ARCHBISHOP VAN MILDERT.)

§ 24. Christ assures his disciples that his separation from them would not be final. JOHN, xvi. 16-22: *It is yet but a little while, a few hours until I suffer, and ye shall not see me, while I am hidden in the sepulchre: and again, I add for your*

comfort, *a little while*, in three days, *and ye shall see me again, because I go*, and am to ascend visibly *to the Father* in your presence, that ye may bear witness to the event. 17. The disciples, hoping perhaps, for a temporal kingdom, did not penetrate into the meaning of our Lord's words: *some*, therefore, *of his disciples said among themselves, What means this that he saith to us,—‘A little while, and ye shall not see me;’ and again, ‘A little while, and ye shall see me,’ and ‘because I go to the Father,’—18, they said, therefore, among themselves, What means this little while of which he speaks? we cannot tell what he says.*

19. *Now Jesus*, whose divine knowledge reaches to the secret workings of the heart, *knew that they were desirous to ask him for further explication, anticipated their wish, and said to them, Do ye debate with one another concerning this which I said, ‘A little while, and ye shall not see me,’—and again, ‘A little while, and ye shall see me?’* 20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall shortly weep and lament for a while, on account of my crucifixion and burial: but, in the meantime, the world [the unbelieving Jews] shall rejoice, as if it had prevailed against me; and ye shall be sorrowful at the loss of my presence: but comfort yourselves with the thought that your sorrow shall be quickly turned into joy.* 21. *Just as a woman, when she is in labour, has sorrow, because her hour of agony is come: but when she has brought forth the child, she remembereth no more her pangs, for her joy, that a male child has been born into the world, for the future support and honour of her family. (Psalm cxxvii.)* 22. *And so it is that ye now indeed have sorrow, in expectation of my departure: but I will see you again after the third day; and your hearts shall rejoice: and no one shall deprive you of your joy.*

THE importance of this passage will be better understood, if we regard the occasion, on which these assurances of comfort were addressed to the apostles. But why may we not enlarge our thoughts a little, by looking upon the disciples to be, as then they really were, the Church Universal in so many persons? If, in this extended sense, their sorrow will represent the affliction of every Christian; so the joy of the apostles, con-

ceived at our Lord's return to them on the *third* day, will prefigure that inexpressible satisfaction which must needs flow from the sight of his glorified body, the enjoyment of his presence, and the bliss of an immutable state in heaven.

The nature of that joy, which, after the sorrows and calamities of earth, all true disciples are allowed to expect, may be considered, in reference to this portion of our Lord's address, in *three* respects.

1. The ground of it is implied in those words, '*I will see you again.*' How reviving was the accomplishment of this promise to his disciples, when, at his return from the empty tomb, they found all their hopes alive again, their faith confirmed, and their courage rendered invincible, in the sight of him! But, if the continuance of this, for forty days only, could inspire so just a joy; what transports must possess all the faithful, when they shall attain the 'end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls;' when they shall dwell and reign with their Lord for ever; when their own bodies shall be glorified; when faith and hope shall be swallowed up in fruition; and, to sum up in St. John's phrase, when they shall be drawn into a likeness with God, and 'see him as he is.'

2. This leads us to consider a *second* property of this joy; the truth and solidity of it intimated in those words, '*Your heart shall rejoice.*' The enjoyments of this world are rather appearances than substance. Those pleasures that are sinful, leave such terrible stings behind, that, in the midst of that laughter, the heart is sorrowful; and, even those that are innocent, must not claim this title of satisfactions. To this, nothing in truth can have right, which is not commensurate to the desires of a reasonable soul. And this nothing can be, but a feeling of the favour of God; and a delight, resulting from those things which are agreeable to his will. We see what more than conquest this disposition of mind enabled the apostles to attain, even in persecutions, and torments, and death. And shall not that which sustained them against all the violence of their bitterest enemies, be much more perfect when "all enemies shall be destroyed?" Shall not that, which subdued the reluctancies of human nature, be more exquisite, when all infirmities of that nature are done away? If the heart of good men can rejoice, when the flesh is in fear and grief; they will certainly

rejoice much more, when the body is above suffering. Nothing beyond this joy is to be desired, except the continuance.

3. And of this duration we have assurance, expressed in those words, '*Your joy no man taketh from you.*' Now this is a mode of speech denoting an utter impossibility of losing this joy: and that neither any human, nor any other means, have power to deprive us of it. And this is a most valuable circumstance indeed; such as perfectly distinguishes between our future and all our present joys. Of these, we have at best but very slippery hold. And, were there more in them than really there is; yet the pleasure must needs be damped with that melancholy prospect, that they will one day forsake us; and we cannot be certain, that they will not do it very quickly.

So reasonable it appears to wean our affections from those things which are not, cannot be, our rest: and to lay the whole stress upon that one thing, which alone can avail us. To this argument may be applied the words of the prophet Jeremiah, '*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, saith the Lord.*' And reason good: for this 'is life eternal, to know him, the only true God; and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.' It is the only way to it, in this world; and it is the bliss of it, in that which is to come. But a bliss, in strict speaking, it could not be, if it were not eternal: liable to no decays of nature, no wastings of time; nothing without to destroy it, nothing within to diminish it; subject only to the will of the Almighty Giver, and given with a resolution never to be taken back again. '*For the promises of God are unchangeable, and his gifts without repentance.*'

Of such comfortable import are the words spoken to the disciples in a very critical juncture. And, if duly considered, they will have a like effect upon us, as they had upon them; in composing our minds in times of trouble. Let us consider, that this cannot last always; that patience bringeth forth precious fruit; and that it will be our own fault, if our labour and sufferings do at last prove abortive. Let us set the 'lightness' of the 'affliction' against the 'weight of glory,' and the 'momentary' passage of the one against the 'eternal' stability of

the other. For this would enable us, in humble imitation of our blessed Master, to 'endure the cross for the joy that is set before us.' Put the utmost and worst of the case, that we are called to 'resist unto blood;' yet, even in death, we have this reflection to support us, that there is but one 'pain more,' and then the 'man is born:' born into a world of bliss and immortality, to a life of 'joy' most exquisite and ravishing to the 'heart,' and that '*a joy which no man taketh from him.*' (DEAN STANHOPE.)

§ 25. Efficacy of praying in the name of Christ. JOHN, xvi. 23, 24 : *AND in that day when I shall have sent the Comforter, ye will not want to ask any question of me : the Comforter is your monitor : and all things will be revealed unto you : for verily, verily, I say unto you, That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, as Mediator between God and man, he will give it you. 24. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name as Mediator : ask whatever is necessary for the discharge of your office ; and ye shall receive, that your joy in God may be complete.*

THIS gracious assurance is now given, for the third time, to the apostles for their consolation and encouragement. (John, xiv. 14 ; xv. 16.) What our Mediator deemed fit to repeat, demands the repetition of our grateful meditation.

To pray or ask in the name of Christ, is, in its first and most obvious signification, to make open mention of him in our prayers ; to offer them to the Father in and through his meritorious name, and to appear with him for our Mediator at the throne of grace. No better model for our devotions can be found, than those forms of prayer which the Church prescribes in her Liturgy : and as in others, so in this particular, those forms are very deserving of our attention, in that they always teach us to present ourselves before our almighty and merciful Father, in the name of his well-beloved Son.

Again : to pray in the name of Christ, is not only to make open mention of him in our prayers, but to place a real and heartfelt reliance upon his merits alone, to recommend us to his heavenly Father. Unworthy as we are to appear in the pre-

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sence of that Being, whose name is 'holy,' and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, by the imputed righteousness of Christ, we become well-pleasing in his sight. It is that righteousness alone, which can recommend us to Almighty God; and it is that alone, which we must plead in our recommendation, not with our lips only, but in our hearts.

Further: to pray in the name of Christ, carries with it an obligation to imitate that humility of soul, that submission of will and inclination, which, in his human character, he set us the example of practising. 'Not my will,' said he in that character to his heavenly Father, 'not my will, but thine be done!' Earnestly as we may desire that, which we pray to have granted, we must desire it with all resignation to Him, whose will it should be our most earnest desire and longing to perform: nor, without such a submission of our will to his, can we be truly said to pray in the name of Christ, inasmuch as, without it, we cannot be truly said to be his disciples and followers.

To pray in the name of Christ, may be understood as implying, moreover, that we pray with a steadfast resolution to obey the laws of Him, to whom we are petitioning for mercies. 'When, in the days of his flesh, Christ had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared,' (or 'for his piety,' as it is rendered in the margin of our bibles;) 'though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.' And if his piety was a recommendation even of his prayers to his heavenly Father, what are we, that we should presume 'to name his name' in our addresses to the throne of grace, unless we 'depart from iniquity,' and imitate the piety which he hath set before us, and the obedience which he learned, that he might become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him? 'Them that honour me,' saith the Lord God, 'I will honour:' but 'the prayers of the wicked are an abomination,' both to the Father, to whom they are offered; and to the Son, in whose name the offering is pretended to be made.

Furthermore; to pray in the name of Christ, may be interpreted as involving the necessity of praying with the gracious help of his Holy Spirit. God gave not 'the Spirit by measure unto

him' (John, iii. 34) : but he attended him in unbounded fulness throughout his sufferings, until he enabled him to 'offer himself without spot unto God' (Heb. ix. 14) ; and, together with the blood, wherewith he sealed his sacrifice for sin, to pour forth those petitions of pious resignation and universal charity, which he uttered whilst he was hanging on the cross. That our prayers may be heard, we must 'worship God in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.' (John, iv. 23.) Weak as we are by nature, this is what we cannot do without his preventing and assisting grace : but by receiving the adoption of sons, by being admitted into the family of our heavenly Father and made joint heirs with Christ, his grace becomes sufficient for us ; his strength is made perfect in our weakness. And, 'because we are sons, God sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry Abba, Father.' (Rom. viii. 15.)

Lastly, to pray in the name of Christ supposes us to pray with a full assurance of hope and faith, that by virtue of his precious blood-shedding and of his powerful mediation and intercession with the Father, our prayers will be heard at the throne of grace. Faith in him, as the one Mediator between God and man ; faith in him, as having 'died for our sins, and risen again for our justification,' and as 'ever living to make intercession for us ;' in a word, faith in him, as being 'able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him : ' is especially and indispensably necessary to us, if we would pray to the Father in Christ's name. We must confess him, we must trust in his merits, we must follow his humility, we must copy his obedience, we must partake of his spirit : but, as the foundation and spring of all, we must believe that he saveth his people from their sins, heretofore by his death, and now by his mediation.

To them, who thus ask of the Father in the Son's name, an assurance is given, that their prayers shall be favourably received. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you,' these are the words of the Son himself, 'whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' Is it true then, that, literally speaking, whatsoever we ask of God, he will give us ? We may ask for many things, sinful in themselves, or hurtful in the application of them : in this sense, therefore, the promise is to

be understood, that, if they are conducive to the promotion of God's glory, and to the present welfare and future salvation of our souls, 'all these things he will give us.' As to all other things, they ought to be regarded by us only as means, whereby those great ends may be attained : whatever may appear to us the best means for attaining them, it is reasonable that we should pray for : but still we should always pray with a firm persuasion, that our own judgment as to the means must be infinitely below that of 'the Judge of all the earth;' and we should therefore be convinced, that, however he may appear to refuse our petitions, he is really and effectually granting them, although we may not always in this life be permitted to see the accomplishment of the grant. Often, however, they may be perceived, where the efficacy of prayer is written in characters of plain and direct accomplishment : not rarely in the enjoyment of temporal blessings : but more certainly and more signally in those of a spiritual kind ; in hearty repentance for past sins, and a steadfast faith in the blood of the Redeemer ; in purity of heart, and sanctification of spirit ; in humility and resignation ; in conscientious exertions for the glory of God and the benefit of our brethren ; in the communion and testimony of the Holy Ghost ; in the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and keepeth the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. These are some of the blessings, which the Father giveth in this life to them, that ask in his Son's name. They are such things as the world cannot give. They are blessings, which those, who weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary, esteem greater than all the kingdoms of the world, and richer than all the glory of them. They are a present evidence of the favour of God in this life ; and an earnest of salvation, in another. (BISHOP MANT.)

§ 26. Among other topics of Christian instruction, our Lord alludes (v. 28) to his Eternity, Incarnation, Death, and Ascension. JOHN, xvi. 25-32: *THESE things have I spoken unto you obscurely in figures : but the time is coming, when, between my resurrection and ascension (Acts, i. 8), I will no more speak to you in figures ; but I will instruct you, with plainness, in all things which relate to the perfections, truth, and will of the Father.*

26. *In that day ye will learn to petition in my name : and I need not say anything of my asking and importuning the Father on your account ; though ye may rely upon my office of mediation : 27, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved and obeyed me ; and have believed that I came out from God, as the Messiah and messenger of his grace.*

28. *I came out from the glory of the Father, and, by incarnation, am come into the world. Again ; by my death, I am leaving the world ; and, by my ascension, am returning to the Father.*

29. *His disciples said to him, 'Lord, behold now thou speakest very plainly to us, and usest no figure or obscure form of expression : 30, now we know experimentally, by thy discerning our inmost thoughts, that thou knowest all things, and hast no need, that any of us should put questions to thee respecting our secret doubts : on this account, therefore, we firmly believe that thou art omniscient, and that thou camest out from God.*

31. *Jesus answered them, " Do ye now at length believe ? and do ye confidently apprehend your faith to be firm ? Behold, the hour is coming, yea is even now come, that ye all shall be dispersed, every one to your own habitations, and shall leave me alone and abandoned : and yet I am not alone : for the Father is with me ; and he will bring me to the glory reserved for me."*

IN this portion of our Lord's address,—the twenty-eighth verse is full of evangelical doctrine: it contains the whole economy of the Gospel of man's salvation, and a consummate abridgement of the Christian faith. This gave to the disciples a key to the whole of our Lord's discourse ; and especially to that part (v. 16) which had (vv. 17, 18) so exceedingly embarrassed them. The disciples now received (v. 29) more light on the nature of Christ's person and office, than they had ever done before. (A. CLARKE.) These communications of our Lord are, on this account, especially worthy of our meditation.

I. *I came forth from the Father ; with whom (as the words imply) Christ had existed from eternity, in glory. To this original condition, our Lord alludes in his subsequent Prayer : " O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was : (xvii. 5.) And now*

I come to thee : (v. 13.) Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," (v. 24.) His harbinger had rightly proclaimed the dignity of the approaching Monarch : "The same was in the beginning with God : all things were made by him : " and therefore, he himself must, by his creative power, be eternal. Our Lord had thus an existence previous to being begotten of the Virgin Mary. He was the First and the Last ; Alpha and Omega. It is his own declaration, ' Before Abraham was, I am.' This belief in Jesus as the eternal Son of God, ought to raise in us a thankful acknowledgment of the infinite love of God, apparent in sending his Only-Begotten Son into the world, to die for sinners. Herein is love : not that we loved God ; but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The estimation of this act of God's love must necessarily increase in proportion to the dignity of him who was sent : what human intellect, therefore, can fathom the depth of this divine love ? or what return of gratitude can correspond to such infinite love ?

II. "*I am come into the world*" by INCARNATION. How profound the mystery of godliness, that the Creator of the world should assume the form of a creature ; that the infinite Deity and finite flesh should meet in one person ; and yet the Godhead not becoming man, nor the humanity becoming God. This mystery is affirmed in other passages : "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." And yet by this abasement, Christ not only exhibited a complete pattern of virtue to men, and familiarly instructed them in every point of faith and practice, not dazzling our eyes by too bright a lustre, but condescending to our capacities for our more efficacious instruction ; but (as the occasion of this valedictory discourse reminds us) Jesus, as man, offered to God an expiatory sacrifice in the very nature, in which the holiness of God had been outraged. Man had offended ; man must be punished ; but human nature, except when Christ assumed it, could not have placed upon the altar of an offended God, a victim so pure in excellence, so exalted in dignity, as the spotless Paschal Lamb, realized in the person of Jesus Christ, pre-eminently THE HOLY ONE.

III. *I leave the world*, even by the thorny path of CRUCIFIXION. Of this particular mode of death, our Lord had given occasional intimations. He had told Nicodemus, that

"as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so *must the Son of Man be lifted up.*" (John, iii. 14.) On his road to Jerusalem he had apprised his disciples what treatment he was about to experience; a communication very unwelcome to the worldly prejudices of hearers who expected, that by his victorious sword, the royal empire would be restored to Israel. Yet this was the kind of death, by which the Man of Sorrows redeemed us from the malediction of the Law, by taking upon himself the penalty of "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The rigour of the Law was abolished, when the hand-writing of ordinances was blotted out, and nailed to the Cross. This death is the most intimate and essential part of his Mediatorship: as *prophet* or teacher, he confirmed by his death the doctrine which he taught: as *priest*, he came to do the will of God, when oblations and sacrifices and burnt-offerings had been rejected: as *king*, he humbled himself even to the death upon the Cross, that he might be Lord of the dead and of the living, and be seated in regal dignity at the right hand of God.

IV. Lastly: our Saviour *went to the Father* by his ASCENSION. This great event had been represented typically by the high-priest's entrance, with the blood of a sacrificed victim, into the Holy of Holies. The Ascension had been declared prophetically by David in words, which could not be applied to any but to Christ; who ascended up on high, leading death and sin as his captives, and receiving gifts reserved for effusion on the day of Pentecost. Nor was this Ascension metaphorical or figurative; but real, bodily, and visible. While he was blessing his disciples, a cloud received him out of the sight of the apostles. To this Ascension, our Saviour, in this valedictory address, makes allusions: He was "going to prepare a place in the many mansions;" "I go my way to him that sent me." Without this Ascension, the Comforter would not come unto them. (xvi. 7.) But did Jesus ascend for those disciples only, whose grief he was assuaging? If St. Paul justly terms Christ a *fore-runner*, there must be followers. We are branches of that Vine which has been transplanted into heaven, and furnishes the first-fruits of the human race. He is our head: and what is now the condition of the head, such will be that of the members.

If meditations so sublime in their nature, draw forth from us the warm conviction expressed by the disciples, *We believe that thou camest forth from God*; let us, at the same time, remember the admonitory question of our Lord, “Do ye now believe?” Self-confidence is a sandy foundation. May God grant that the sincerity of our conviction may be evinced by the unbroken allegiance of a life devoted to his service.

§ 27. Christ has overcome the World. JOHN, xvi. 33: *THESE things have I spoken unto you in my parting address, that, under approaching trials, ye might by faith in me, have peace and serenity of soul. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be courageous: I shall overcome the power and persecutions and malice of the world: ye will fight with enemies already conquered.*

WE feel by our sad experience, without the need of an especial revelation on this point, that in ourselves we have not strength to withstand, much less to overcome, the world. If our first parents, in their best estate, in their full strength, were overcome by it, resistance must be still more difficult to their degenerate children. Many philosophers, ancient and modern, have talked, very finely, of vice and virtue; but it was mere talk: where it came to the point, they were no more able to subdue the one and practise the other, than they were to remove mountains, and create worlds. Indeed, our whole nature is corrupted, and all the powers of our souls are out of tune; and therefore our actions are so; whether we are conscious of it or not. But lest we should take no notice of it ourselves, God himself reminds us, that the thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually. (Gen. vi. 5.) St. Paul pronounces that we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think anything of ourselves: (2 Cor. iii. 5); and if we cannot so much as think, how can we do, anything that is good, of ourselves? And if we can do nothing at all, how can we perform so great a thing, as to overcome the whole world?

But blessed be God who hath made a way for us to achieve this labour,—and only one way,—even by Jesus Christ. He

himself has declared, "Without me, ye can do nothing:" (John, xv. 5): he excludes, therefore, all possibility of our overcoming the world by procuring pardon of past sins and supplies of grace, —without his especial intervention. To the same purpose as our Saviour's declaration, we are assured that there is not salvation in any other; and that there is none other name whereby we must be *saved*, but the name of Christ (Acts, iv. 12): in this passage, by *being saved*, we are not to understand only our eternal salvation in heaven, but all things necessary in order to it; more especially our being saved from the guilt and strength of sin, contracted by yielding to an evil world. But for this very purpose Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity. For this purpose he was exalted, that he might be a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. For this purpose, he ever liveth to make intercession for us that he may save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. (Heb. vii. 25.) We cannot doubt, therefore, that by Christ, we may be enabled to overcome the world, and all things which impede our salvation. "Be of good cheer" (saith our Lord, in his present address, v. 33), "*I have overcome the world.*" So that, under his banner, we fight against a conquered enemy; and therefore, we need not fear defeat, so long as we keep close to him who hath all power given him both in heaven and in earth; and is always ready to impart as much of it as our spiritual conflicts require: insomuch that as we can do nothing without him, there is nothing but we can do with him. St. Paul said, from his own experience, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.)

As no man can overcome the world but only by Christ, so no man can overcome it by him, without faith in him. "This is the victory" (saith St. John, 1 Ep. v. 5) "that overcometh the world even our *faith*." Our Lord himself says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." (John, xv. 6.) It is by faith we are engrafted into Christ, and so partake of his Holy Spirit: and unless we believe in him, we can derive no more power from him, than if none resided in him. This belief implies a confidence in him as the Son of God. Thus St. John asks, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

If Christ be not God, what can he do for us? Can a creature appease the wrath, satisfy the justice, and defend us against the power of his and our Almighty Creator? What if Christ spent his life in doing good? That is the bounden duty of every man. What though he suffered a cruel death? If he was a mere human being, his sufferings terminate in himself. But when we obey his precept, *Believe in God, believe also in me*; and thus believe him to be God; then we may well believe in him for grace, and virtue, and for everything necessary for vanquishing the world. As we may well believe he can give it us, if he will, because he is God; so we may believe he will do it, if he can, because he is Man.

The practical efficacy of this faith in overcoming the world, is sufficiently proved by St. Paul, where he enumerates the triumphs of holy men. (Heb. xi.) It is faith which lowers the pride of human reason in obedience to the wisdom of God. It is faith which, appreciating the labours of Christ in redeeming the human soul, employs all strength and every motive to resist the flattery and temptations of an evil world. It is faith which under the pressure of persecution, hatred, and contempt, grasps the Cross of a suffering Redeemer as an anchor to the soul. It gives an insight into the invisible world, and prompts us to have our conversation in heaven. Now if victory be always attended with honour and applause, and if the height of human glory consists in conquering a small portion of earth, and in enslaving the bodies of men; a far greater triumph must await him, who hath vanquished the spiritual foes which this world presented in its terrors and in its snares. In the world, we must have tribulation: and he that has appointed it for us, knows that it is fit we should: but our faith in his compassion and succours will be a sustaining principle: and since Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings, has overcome the world and disarmed it; let us seek that peace which he has established; and press on with a cheerful assurance, that, through the power of his grace and by following his example, the very least of his soldiers shall share in the honour and benefits of his victory. (BISHOP BEVERIDGE.)

§ 28. Christ's last Prayer with his Disciples. Evening introducing the sixth day of the week.

JOHN, xvii. 1-26: *JESUS spake these words* (John, xiv.-xvi.) ; *and then devoutly lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour of expiating the sins of the world is come: glorify thy Son* by supporting his human nature to be a pattern of meekness and love and zeal under approaching sufferings, by his resurrection, and ascension, descent of the Holy Spirit; *that thy Son also, in the series of his conduct, may glorify thee* in the display of thy justice, truth, holiness, and mercy: 2, 3, *since by the engagements of thy covenant of redemption thou hast given him the mediatorial power over all the human race, that he may give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him: 3, and this is the way to life eternal that they may know the perfections of thee, the only true God, to the exclusion of all idols,—and also know and believe in Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent into the world, to reveal and merit this life for them.*

4. *I have glorified thee on earth* by my obedience, doctrines, and miracles: *I shall have finished* by my sufferings and death *the work of the Messiah which thou gavest me to do.*

5. *And now, O Father, do thou glorify me in thine own presence with the glory, which, in my divine nature, I originally possessed with thee before the world was created.*

6. *I have manifested thy name, perfections, and purposes, to the disciples whom thou gavest me out of the world: they were originally thine* by creation, and by thy full right to do with thy creatures as seemeth thee best. *Thou gavest them to me as my disciples: and they have received and retained thy word and doctrine.*

[V. 6: *Thine they were:* as sincere disciples of the dispensation which God had given by Moses: MACKNIGHT. By creation and preservation: BLOOMFIELD; HOLDEN. The objects of thy choice, even before they were converted: SCOTT. Objects of thy choice: A. CLARKE. Thine they previously were by faith in thee: WHITBY. Thine by electing grace: GILL. Cultores tui ingenui, jam antequam accederent ad te: TITTMANN.]

7. *Now they have understood and are assured, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me in commission, proceed from thee in*

their origin, and tend to thy glory. 8. *For I have declared unto them the doctrines which thou gavest in commission to me; and they have received them with faith and love; and have surely known that I came out from thee, and have believed that thou didst send me.*

9. *I, therefore, pray for them as believers: I pray not for the rebellious and unbelieving Jews, but for them whom thou hast given me as my apostles: and my prayer will not be in vain: for they are thine.*

10. *And indeed by our perfect union of essence, all my things are thine, and all thine are mine; and I, equally with thyself, am glorified in them, with the same honour and worship.*

11. *And now I am no longer in the world, as to personal presence in human nature: but these are yet in the world: and I am coming to thee.* While I am separated from them, *do thou, O Holy Father, keep them whom hast given me, in thy name, in the faith and practice of thy Gospel; that they may be one thing in love and doctrine and labours, even according to the union by which we are one person in the Godhead.* 12. *While I was with them in the world, I preserved them in thy name, and through the influences of thy grace: those whom thou gavest me as apostles, I have kept; and no one of them is lost but the son of perdition, one justly obnoxious to death; who has been left to perish: thus the predictions of Scripture are fulfilled in him.* (Psalm cix. 8; Acts, i. 20.)

13. *And now, O Father, I come unto thee: and these words of exhortation and intercession I speak in the hearing of my disciples while I am in the world; that they may have my joy, the joy which they have derived from my presence, abundantly completed in them by the joy which will henceforth be derived in my absence, from the presence of the Comforter.*

14. They will greatly need the support of this joy: *I have given them thy doctrine, to be preached by them: and the sinful world [the unbelieving Jews] hath already hated them, and will persecute them, because they are not of the world [the unbelieving Jews] in principle and practice; even as I am not of the world.*

15. *I pray not, however, that thou shouldest remove them from among unbelievers, whom they are appointed to convert;*

but that thou shouldest preserve them from Satan, the evil one, who has already entered into Judas, and will not spare them.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* But as they need to be completely purified for their great work, 17, *consecrate them by the purifying influences of thy Holy Spirit, to the ministry of thy truth : that excellent word of thine is truth.* 18. *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* 19. *And for their sakes, I devote and consecrate myself as a victim for the approaching sacrifice ; that they also may be consecrated to maintaining the truth of the Gospel, even unto death itself.*

20. *Neither pray I for these alone my apostles ; but for them also who, through all ages, believe on me through their word ;* 21, *that they all may be truly and intimately one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us ; that so the world [or, Jewish people] seeing their charity and joy, may believe that thou hast sent me ; and that a religion, thus productive of the rare amiable virtues, is indeed of a divine origin.*

22. *And the future glory and happiness which thou gavest me (v. 24) I shall communicate in part to them that they may be one in unity and blessedness, even as we are one.*

23. *I, in them ; and thou, in me ; that they may be perfected so as to be one ; and that the world may know and acknowledge that thou hast sent me (v. 21) ; and that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

24. *Father, I would that they also whom thou hast given me, even all thy chosen and sanctified people, may be with me, where I am ; that they may contemplate the glory (v. 22) which thou hast given to me their friend and brother ; for thou lovedst me, before the foundation of the world.*

25. *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee : but I have known thee and laboured for thy glory : and these my disciples have known that thou hast sent me.*

26. *And I have declared thy name to them, and will declare it by my instructions (Acts, i. 8) and by sending the Comforter (John, xvi. 13, 25) : that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them ; and I, in them by my spiritual presence.*

§ 29. Our Lord solicits the glory which was due to the labours of the Messiah. JOHN, xvii. 1, 5 : FATHER, *glorify thy Son.* 5. *O Father, glorify thou me.*

AMONG the proofs that those whom Jesus loved, he loved unto the end; the chief place must be assigned to the holy prayer, which Christ, immediately before his Passion, poured forth to God, in behalf of his disciples. It is a prayer, which may be justly called the basis of the Christian Church, from its very earliest origin, and extending through its eternal duration. A more holy, a more efficacious, a more pathetick prayer was never uttered. It derives much interest from its particular occasion. Christ is here represented as a dying father, who not only instructs his children how they should comport themselves after his decease; but by earnest affectionate prayer, he commends them unto God. The night was far advanced, his own sufferings were at hand; his human strength might have been exhausted by the long and intense discourses, recorded in the three preceding chapters: but nothing could deter him from imploring the operation of God's Spirit in favour of those whom he was about to leave on earth. Amid the deep and various petitions, which this sacerdotal prayer of Christ contains, let us confine our attention to a few leading particulars: our Lord, for himself, solicits *the glory due to his labours as the Messiah.* He prays that his disciples may be *protected, sanctified, united, and rewarded.* As the Redeemer of the human race, he prays *for all who* by the ministry of his apostles, *embrace the true faith*, in his holy name. Thus as the Jewish high-priest, on the day of atonement, was required to make annual intercession for himself; for his household, the priests and Levites; and for the whole nation;—so Jesus, our all-sufficient High-priest, once for all, on this his great day of atonement, solemnly intercedes with God his Father, for himself, that he may be received into his original glory; for his household, the apostles; and for the conversion of the whole world.

Our Lord, previously to entering on his sacerdotal prayer, may be supposed to review the benefits and general nature of his past ministry, as forming the grounds of his confidence in

thus addressing his heavenly Father. As the Messiah and Mediator, he had received power over all the human race (v. 2); and how had that power been exercised? He had communicated *eternal life* (v. 3) by imparting the knowledge of himself and of his heavenly Father, the only true God. The idolatry of the Gentiles would be abolished by their being brought to acquaintance with the revealed word; and divine worship would be paid to the only true God; and altars no more erected to an unknown God. Christ had given *eternal life*. By his approaching sacrifice he would redeem the forfeited life of sinners, impart a life of sanctification and justification upon earth; *quicken* them into righteousness; and by the resurrection from the dead, associate all true believers in his own *eternal* existence. Our Lord had glorified God on the earth (v. 4,) and had manifested his name (vv. 6, 26). Somewhat of God's name was known by the works of creation and by the Mosaic law; and even could be faintly traced in the corrupt remnants of a revelation formerly made: but now the name of God, his nature, and his attributes, his designs and counsels for the salvation of mankind, were no longer obscured: they were *manifested* clearly and perspicuously. Jesus had given unto men the words which he had received from God (v. 8); and therefore words, not mixed with Jewish fables, idle traditions, and commandments of men. God thus became *glorified upon the earth* (v. 4). The whole life of Christ was a glorifying of his Father, by the doctrine which he preached; by the miracles which he wrought; by the unspotted purity of his life; and by his unparalleled sufferings at his death. A voice was about to issue from the Cross, and to reach, like the beams of the sun, to the very ends of the earth; and wherever the voice was heard, there would Jehovah be glorified by the repentance and faith of sinners, converted as grateful servants to their heavenly Benefactor. Jesus had *manifested* the name of God (v. 6) to the disciples whom God had given him: he had taught them by his doctrine; and by his miracles, had given them the clearest prospect of the divine power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness. By this vigilant care (v. 12) none had been lost, save one unhappy reprobate: the others Jesus had kept in the name of his Father, in his truth, love, and worship. This consciousness of faithful labour in the office of Messiah, draws forth from

Jesus the grand words, which can never issue from other lips, "Father, I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."

These labours of the Messiah were not to pass unrewarded: on their account, God was highly to exalt him as to his human nature, and give him a name above every name. Thus our Lord commences the requests contained in his sacerdotal prayer, by saying, "*The hour is come: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: now glorify thy Son.*" Those words were accomplished when God supported his Son's human nature under mysterious sufferings, which were endured with a meekness, patience, love, and zeal, such as were never witnessed in a human being. God glorified his Son by such wonders, attending his sufferings, and so glorious a resurrection, as entirely removed the scandal of the Cross. His judge declared his innocence. Some were compelled even by what they saw at his ignominious death, to say, '*Surely, this was a righteous man.*' Some who, perhaps, had clamoured for his death, returned smiting their breasts. Christ was glorified by being acknowledged by many, to be the promised Messiah and as the universal Saviour; and by such proofs of his Godhead as seemed to instruct and convince mankind. God glorified Christ by accepting his death for the sins of the world; by a speedy resurrection, and a triumphant exaltation to his own right hand. God, soon after his Son's death, declared him Lord, a Prince, and a Saviour: so that the glory conferred was (as our Saviour expresses it), "*The glory which he had with God, before the world was made.*" Our Lord had originally been in the form of God and really God, previously to taking upon himself the form of a servant and likeness of man. After his ascension, he resumed that original glory: he sometimes declares, that he will come hereafter in *the glory of the Father* (Matt. xvi. 27): sometimes in his own glory (Matt. xxv. 31); sometimes in the glory of both (Luke, ix. 26). This glory, Christ now desires to be given to him, not only as the Eternal Word, as he was before in heaven, but as the Word made flesh below.

§ 30. The first petition, uttered by our Saviour, in favour of his disciples, is Protection. JOHN, xvii. 11: *HOLY Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me.*

THE request for protection is what the tenderness of Christ immediately suggested. Protection, in its general sense, is that act of divine Providence which is extended towards all living creatures; but in a religious meaning it expresses that more especial vigilance, which is vouchsafed to the children of redemption. "*The Lord*," saith David (Ps. xxxvii. 28), "*forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.*" This preservation implies, that they who are thus preserved, are the peculiar inheritance of God: and hence the Church is dignified by those honourable titles, 'the people of God,' 'the apple of his eye,' 'his treasure,' 'his crown,' 'his bride,' 'his flock.' Not that we have any inherent dignity in ourselves, but because we are bought by a price, and are destined to a glorious end. Preservation, in a religious sense, implies, that we are exposed to great perils, such as result from spiritual enemies, and from the contagious nature of sin. Preservation implies, that we have no strength properly our own but that in grace, as well as in nature, we must humbly exclaim, "*When thou hidest thy face, we are troubled; when thou takest away our breath, we are turned again to our dust.*" (Ps. civ. 29.) All the attributes of God shine forth in this preservation of his redeemed. We therein trace his knowledge, by which he foresees impending dangers; his power, by which he adopts the means of baffling our assailants; his mercy and patience, which do not allow him to be alienated from us through our repeated iniquities and ingratitude.

The sacred history is one continued narrative of the protection which the children of God experience from him. Observe the care which God took of Noah, when he miraculously saved him from the avenging waters of the Deluge. Observe the protection which God vouchsafed to Lot, when he led him forth from the penal conflagration. Observe the protection extended to Abraham, when the patriarch went forth, not knowing whither he was going. Observe the protection which Jacob experienced against the machinations of his unnatural brother. Observe the protection which shielded Joseph, and led him from slavery up to princely power. Observe the protection which signalized

David, when his adversary pursued him, as a man doth hunt a partridge upon the mountains. Chariots and horses of fire encamp around the righteous.

This divine protection was more especially needed by our Lord's disciples at the time when he besought it: v. 11: "*And now I am no more in the world: but these are in the world: and I come to thee.*" The season of their peril was at hand: they were to be summoned to the bitterest persecutions, in the cause of truth: v. 14: "*The world hath hated them; because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" In themselves they were feeble; the little flock, sheep in the midst of wolves. Nothing, therefore, could be more grateful than to hear, from this marked intercession of their Master, with what tender solicitude he was interested in their behalf: thereby proving himself to be that good and faithful shepherd, who wills not that the very weakest lamb of his flock should perish. Thus the prayer of Christ would be heard, "*They may have my joy fulfilled in themselves,*" v. 13; that the joy hitherto derived from my love and care and immediate presence, may, in my absence, be increased by the presence of that Spirit whose fruits are joy and peace.

This protection, however, does not lead us to suppose, that the days of Christians are to pass in one unclouded sunshine. The good must submit to affliction, not only for the trial of their own fidelity, but that their enduring patience may animate the courage of the weaker brethren. The prayer of Christ is far from promising this total immunity from danger. *I pray not* (saith Christ) *that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil.* (v. 15.) While we abide in the world, so long are we subject to the persecutions of evil men, and to the treachery of our own evil hearts. Still God may be said, in a limited sense, to preserve us from evil, when his Holy Spirit helpeth our infirmities, fortifies our wavering faith, and animates us in the hour of temptation: so that, in due time, we rise victorious, doubly victorious, over surrounding evils; 1, by promoting the glory of God in this world, and, 2, by obtaining the crown of our fidelity in the world to come. In the former sense, St. Paul exclaims, *Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ* (2 Cor. ii. 14); in the latter, *The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will*

preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. iv. 18); and in both senses, in reference to the two worlds, the apostle raises that hymn of victory, "*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Rom. viii. 38.)

§ 31. Our Lord implores that his disciples may be fitted, by holiness, for their holy labours. JOHN, xvii. 17 : *SANCTIFY them through thy truth.*

THE word, rendered by *sanctify*, has two meanings: 1, to separate from common use, and dedicate to God: 2, to make holy or pure; since whatever offering is laid upon God's altar, must be a victim, whole, pure, and unblemished. In this latter sense, our Lord prays that the apostles, consecrated to his service, may not disgrace their holy calling; but be patterns of holiness to those to whom they announce the salvation of God.

Most wisely did Jesus implore this holiness for his disciples, not only because they were intended to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, but because the progress of sanctification is the most powerful instrument of conciliating that protection, which was the subject of our Lord's preceding petition. There is nothing so effectual to maintain the citadels of Sion, as the holiness of her champions. By sanctity of life, the accusations of Satan are repelled; the mouth of the enemy is stopped; and the bitterest adversaries of God are compelled to pay homage to that virtue, which shines forth in the deportment of his saints. God himself, who is honoured by this increase of piety, is thereby influenced to the literal performance of all his promises of protection: inasmuch as he is the God, who among the holy will shew himself holy, clean with the clean, and perfect with the perfect. Christians should earnestly pray that the grace which hath separated them from the world, may preserve them from the evil of it. They should seek to be sanctified, more and more, through the word of truth. They should carefully examine whether the doctrines which they hold, have a sanctifying effect upon their own hearts and lives. For as all divine truth is of a holy nature, if our sentiments do not make

us hate all sin, we may be sure either that they are not divine truths; or that we do not receive them by a living faith, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

To a diligent observance of the holiness for which our Lord prays in behalf of his disciples, they are urged in all ages of the Church, by the most pressing motives.

By the Gospel, we have clearer discoveries of God's will than ever was before. The moral law, as it was at first written upon the tables of man's heart, was so defaced by the fall of our first parents, that by the light of reason, we can scarce read any one command aright. And though the same law was afterwards transcribed into two tables of stone, that all might have it before their eyes; yet there also it was not so legible as it is in the Gospel; as is plain from the sad and strange misconstructions by which the Rabbins, before our Saviour's time, had perverted it. But now that God hath spoken to us, not only by his prophets and apostles, but by his well-beloved Son; and hath revealed, in full light, his will and pleasure concerning our duties to Him and to our neighbours; he now expects that we faithfully perform it, in holy obedience.

2. We have not only clearer discoveries of our duty, but a more perfect example of holiness, in the Gospel, than has been or can be anywhere else. In the Gospel, the life and actions of Christ are recorded; whose whole ministry was one continued act of perfect piety. His example includes every duty incident to all emergencies of life, and extending to every rank and station. In all that he spake or did, he intended, as St. Peter assures us, to leave us an example that we should follow his steps. (1 Pet. ii. 21.) He himself enjoins us *to learn of him*. (Matt. xi. 29.) To follow his example or obey his precepts, is one and the same road to holiness.

3. In following after Christian holiness, we have promises of assistances such as never had been before. If we are truly sensible of our sins, and desire to be cleansed from them, and sincerely endeavour to do what we can ourselves; and believe in Christ, and trust in him to enable us to do what we ourselves cannot; we cannot miss of receiving such supplies whereby our dark minds shall be so enlightened; our erroneous judgments so informed; our perverse wills so rectified; our inordinate affections so regulated; our hard hearts so softened; our proud

spirits so humbled ; our sleepy consciences so awakened ; as to be truly *holy* in all conversation and godliness.

4. In the Gospel, we have the greatest assurance of acceptance before God. Whatsoever endeavour any others may make after piety and virtue, they have no grounds to believe that God will accept their faint endeavours instead of real duties : or rather they had just cause to believe the contrary, from a consciousness that their best performances came infinitely short of what the divine justice might demand. But Christ hath assured us, that our duties, if sincerely performed, will, through and in him, be accepted notwithstanding their many failures and imperfections. This consideration should make us to exceed, in holiness, all to whom the Gospel has not been so clearly revealed.

5. In the Gospel, we are assured of future happiness, in case we labour to practise what the Gospel requires. The heathens, by the light of nature, could discern but little of a future life ; and therefore, were compelled to resolve the reward of virtue into virtue itself ; making the satisfaction which arises from the exercise of it, a sufficient recompense for the endeavours after it. But the clear and infallible assurances which the Gospel holds out to obedient followers, of being admitted into the presence of the Infinite God, himself the Chief God,—are the most cogent inducements (unless we are distracted in our minds, as well as corrupt in our affections) to be “ *steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as WE KNOW that our labour will not be in vain, in the Lord.*” (1 Cor. xv. 58.) The labour, endured in this world, is connected with rewards in the next. Were the disciples anxious to prove themselves mindful of their Master’s injunctions to exhibit in their conduct, for the edification of all beholders, the sanctifying influence of the Gospel ? For such disciples, the Saviour ardently prays, that *they may be with him, where he is, and behold his glory.* Christ was about to depart in order to prepare, in the many mansions, a place for those who love and obey him. Nor was that glorious prospect confined to the apostles : “ *Neither pray I for these alone ; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word.*” (v. 20.) The Gospel, originally committed to the apostles, descends to all ages and generations, while the Church is militant on earth. The prayer comprises every soul that labours in the Lord Jesus. They who believe in the word

bequeathed by the Evangelists, will believe in the divine author of that word. These share in the hopes of the apostles to "*be with him where he is, and behold his glory.*" They gratefully remember his words, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am, there also shall my servant be.*" (JOHN, xii. 26.)

§ 32. Our Lord is anxious that his disciples may hold the faith not only in righteousness of life (as expressed in the preceding petition), but also in unity of spirit and the bond of peace. JOHN, xvii. 22, 23: *HOLY Father, keep those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are* (v. 11); *that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us* (v. 21); *that they may be one; even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me.*

UNITY among the disciples of Christ ought ever to be of the closest nature; as they have bands peculiar to themselves, bands which bind with greater tightness than any worldly ties. Christians have one God, one heavenly Father, one Redeemer, one spiritual head. They are all regenerated and influenced by one Holy Spirit; they all aspire to one inheritance, to which they are called by the same word of grace. Hence they are considered as branches of the same vine, members of the same body, stones of the same edifice. Those disciples, for whom Christ was now interceding, were more especially bound to cultivate this harmony of spirit, as being called to one and the same labour, viz. the founding of the Christian Church. This desire of union Christ had, on former occasions, most earnestly inculcated upon his disciples; and lest the precept may have been delivered in vain, he now seeks to obtain for them this divine grace by the prevailing efficacy of his prayers.

Let us observe the degree, in which Christ desires his disciples to possess this union: that *they may be one as we are.* It is evident that this expression cannot be literally interpreted, but must be understood in some subordinate sense. For example:—if God and Christ are one in knowledge, so should Christians all speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor. i. 10); if God and Christ are one in affection, so should the multi-

tude of them that believe (Acts, iv. 32), be of one heart and of one soul. If God and Christ are one in their ultimate counsels, so should Christians stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. (Phil. i. 27.)

This blessing of union was the more necessary, both on account of the disciples themselves, and of the whole Christian Church. Their own safety consisted in cultivating this amity : their means of defence would thereby be multiplied against the attacks of their enemies. The foundation, the progress, the consummation, of Christ's earthly kingdom, all turned upon this great hinge of love. Mutual affection would banish all distrusts and jealousies, and repress the emotion of self-love and personal ambition. The unity of their testimony would be a powerful confirmation of it, and promote the glory of their Master. Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation : the same principle applies to the kingdom of God. Jerusalem is not Babel ; she is Salem, not Meribah. When Christ threw down the wall of partition, he intended that there should be one fold ; that the wolf might lie down with the lamb ; that there might be one Lord, and his Name One. (Zech. xiv. 9.) For the accomplishment of these designs, it became necessary, that the leaders of the great work should be fitly compacted together (Eph. iv. 16) unto the edifying which is in love. Christ himself, by imploring this union, declares himself to be the Prince of Peace, the corner-stone of all the spiritual building.

The more closely Christians are united in judgment and affection, and the more entirely they live in peace and harmony, professing the same doctrine, and worshipping God as with one heart and one mouth ; the clearer proof they afford of the excellency of the Gospel, to the conviction of the world around them. The union which prevailed among Christians when the Gospel was first propagated, as springing from the communion of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier,—evidenced to the world the divine original of Christianity, in a manner not less convincing than the miraculous powers of the same Spirit, conferred on them through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. "This faith" (says Irenæus, speaking of a brief creed, adopted in his time) "was the same in all the world : men professed it with one heart and one soul. For though there were different dialects in the world, yet the power of the faith was one and the

same. As one and the same sun enlightened all the world, so the preaching of this truth shined all over and enlightened all men, that were willing to come to the knowledge of truth. Nor did the most eloquent ruler of the Church say any more than this; nor the weakest diminish anything of this tradition: for the faith being one and the same, he that said most of it, could not enlarge it; nor he that said least, take anything from it." (BINGHAM, v. 381.)

In this golden age of the Church, the members had not forgotten the earnest advice of the apostle, "Endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; inasmuch as there is one body, and one spirit; we are called in one hope of our calling; there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." In violating this grand rule, we cannot be too careful in considering whether our departure from Church Communion be dictated by pride, which impelled Diotrephes to seek the pre-eminence; whether we are disputing about matters not connected with vital godliness; whether our vanity be not obtruding crude and ill-considered opinions. Even those who value themselves upon supposed orthodoxy, must reclaim wanderers in a spirit of meekness. Fire and fagot, from which Samaritans were spared, are ill adapted as cement of a Christian Church.

§ 33. All believers are included in our Lord's sacerdotal prayer. JOHN, xvii. 20, 21 : *NEITHER pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word; 21, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.*

THIS prayer extends to those who are yet unborn, and on whom the ends of the world shall come. How immense is this benignity, that Jesus declares himself an Intercessor for all who *were about to believe*. He thus manifests himself to be that Priest who bears on his shoulders and breast the names of all the tribes of Israel. He thus teaches us that his affection embraces not only the present, but the absent; not only the Jews but the Gentiles; inasmuch as he is "the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*." Our Lord thus demonstrates

that the efficacy of his sacrifice is not limited by a few ages, but that his "one offering perfects *for ever* them that are sanctified." To an oblation of this nature, how far inferior, in comparison, are the legal sacrifices which were presented on account only of past transgressions, and never in reference to future. Christ is thus the anti-type of all the saints of old (as of Jacob and Moses and David), who, when lying on their death-beds, bequeathed a benediction to their posterity. It is the declaration of Christ himself, "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son ; that *whosoever*" (Jew or Gentile) "*believeth* in him, might not perish, but have *everlasting* life." Our Lord anticipates this result of his meritorious agony : for as, on one occasion, he announced that his "being lifted up would draw *all* men to him ;" so now he prays that those "who *believe* through the word" (and receive the doctrines connected with the Cross) "may be joined in mysterious union with the Father and himself (v. 21), and be admitted into the beatific view of their Redeemer's glory." This intercession does not include unbelievers. "He that *believeth not*" (saith Christ) "is condemned already : " and for this plain reason, that he rejects and refuses the only means of being justified and sanctified,—and thereby, of attaining to the blessing (mentioned in our Lord's sacerdotal prayer) of being "*one with a Holy God and with a Holy Redeemer.*"

This preceding prayer of our Lord abounds with such deep and solemn truths, that no mortal commentator can display them. The divine nature is asserted throughout. The glory of Christ (v. 1) and of God are inseparably linked together. It was the Father's design to glorify the Son ; and it was the Son's desire to have glory from the Father.

v. 5 : Christ is the eternal God. He had an essential glory with God the Father, before the world was. He had this glory not merely in the purpose and decree of God : he does not say, 'Glorify me with the glory which thou didst purpose for me,' but 'which I had possessed with thee before the world was.' Our Lord, therefore, plainly asserts his own existence and being

from eternity, and prays for a re-exaltation to that glory which he enjoyed before his incarnation.

We trace the marks of a divine omniscience, by which our Lord knew what awaited Judas; what would be the trials of his apostles; what consummation would close his own earthly existence.

The merit of the vicarious sacrifice is clearly expressed. Hence our Lord speaks with confidence of having completely executed his divine mission; he expresses not any anxiety respecting himself, but is absorbed in affection and solicitude for his disciples. In their behalf, and in behalf of generations then in the womb of time, he solicits, through his inherent merit, from the *justice* of God the Father, all spiritual blessings.

v. 3: No knowledge is sufficient to eternal life, but the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ; who therefore is God. For who can think that the knowledge of a mere creature should be accounted equally necessary to salvation, with the knowledge of the great and mighty God?

v. 10: Not only the same *persons* belong equally to the Father and to the Son, but the same *things* also: so that all the power and perfections of the Father are the Son's likewise. There is no competition, but the most perfect harmony and coincidence between their authority and honour.

But after all endeavours to explain this chapter, we must allow that our thoughts are swallowed up in those depths of wisdom and love; and in those mysteries of the Godhead with which it is replete; and that the light of heaven alone can fully clear it up to us. (SCOTT.)

But whatever mysteries may be included in the Sacerdotal Prayer, one consolation is unveiled;—that those petitions which Christ offered for his apostles, were expressly declared not to be intended for them alone; but so far as circumstances should agree, *for all that should believe on him through their word*; and therefore for us, if we are real, and not merely nominal believers. For us doth he still pray, *not that God would immediately take us out of the world*, though for his sake we may be continually hated and injured in it; *but that he would keep us from the evil to which we are here exposed*. For our sakes did he also *sanctify*

himself as a propitiation for our sins, *that we also might be sanctified through the truth*; for he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." (Titus, ii. 14.)

May these wise and gracious purposes of his love be fulfilled in us! *May we be one* with each other, and with him! May that piety and charity appear in the whole series of our temper and behaviour, which may evidently shew the force of our religion, and reflect a conspicuous honour upon the great Founder of it! And may all concur to train us up for that complete felicity above, in which all the purposes of his love centre! It is the declared will of Christ, and let us never forget it, that his people should *be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory which the Father has given him.*

Well may we be encouraged to hope for that happiness, since Christ has an universal *power over all flesh*, and over spirits superior to those that dwell in flesh; with which he is invested on purpose that he may accomplish the salvation of those whom the Father has given him, even of every true believer. We see the certain way to this life, even the knowledge of God in Christ: let us bless God, that we enjoy so many opportunities of obtaining it; and earnestly pray that he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, would by his Divine rays shine forth on our benighted souls; and so animate us in his service, from the noblest principles of gratitude and love, that we may be able to say, even in our dying moments, with somewhat of the same spirit which our Lord expressed, *Father, we have glorified thee on earth, and finished the work which thou gavest us to do*; and therefore, being *no more in the world, we come unto thee.* Then may we hope, in our humble degree, to partake of that glory to which he is returned, and to sit down with him on his victorious throne.

In the meantime, may our faith see, and our zeal confess, Christ! May we acknowledge his Divine authority, as having come out from the Father; may we be united in love to him, and to each other; and be kept by that Divine word which is the security of his people, that *none of them shall be lost*! Let the son of perdition, who perished even from among the apostles,

teach us an humble jealousy over our own hearts, whatever external privileges we enjoy ; and engage us to maintain a continual regard to “ him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy !” (Jude, ver. 24.) (DODDRIDGE.)

A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY
ON
SOME OF THE PARABLES OF OUR BLESSED LORD.

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SOME OF THE PARABLES OF OUR BLESSED LORD.

HAPPINESS does not consist in the abundance of Possessions. LUKE, xii. 13-21 : *AND one of the assemblage said unto Jesus, 'O Teacher, bid my brother divide with me, and withhold not my portion of the inheritance bequeathed by our father.'*

14. *But Jesus, at all times unwilling to interpose in civil matters, said unto him, 'Man, who constituted me over you as an arbitrator, or a divider of inheritances?'*

15. *And Jesus, converting this application into a moral lesson, said to the by-standers, 'See to it, and beware of covetousness : for not even when any man has abundance, does the true happiness of his life come from his possessions.'*

16. *And Jesus spake a parable to them [the surrounding assemblage], saying, 'The estate of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully :'* 17. *And he reasoned within himself, saying, 'What shall I do ? for I have not where I can gather together my fruits.'* 18. *And he said, 'This will I do : I will pull down my granaries, and build larger : and there I will gather together all my produce and my possessions :'* 19. *And I will say to my soul ; Soul, thou hast many conveniences laid up for many years : refresh thyself : eat : drink : indulge thyself sumptuously.*

20. *But God said to him, 'Foolish man, this very night thy soul is demanded of thee : who then shall possess what thou hast prepared ?'*

21. *In this state is the man who layeth up treasure for himself alone, and is not rich, by deeds of piety, towards God.*

v. 13 : Among the Jews, a father's property was divided

equally among his children ; except that to the elder brother, the law allowed a double portion.

THE character, here drawn, is exactly that of a prudent worldly man, who rises from inferior circumstances to great affluence, by assiduous industry and good management ; and then retires from business, to spend the latter part of his life, according to his own inclinations. But there was no grateful regard to the bountiful providence of God, who gave him power to get wealth ; no consideration of his accountableness for the use of it ; and no respect to the authority, commandment, favour, or glory of God. There was no proper sense of the instability of human affairs, the uncertainty of life, the vanity of earthly pleasure, the worth of his soul, or the importance of eternity : no thought of happiness to be found in communion with God, in peace of conscience, and in hope of glory. But the man spake within himself, as if eating, drinking, and being merry, had constituted the chief good of a rational creature ; and as if it might be enjoyed here for ever.

Neither did he express any regard to his neighbour : his wealth was *his own* ; and he would hoard it *for himself*, and spend it *on himself* : for if he had enquired how many poor persons were destitute of food and raiment, and in various ways needed relief ; he might have found a better way to dispose of his superfluity ; and have enjoyed a far superior satisfaction, than what he proposed to himself,—“ What shall I do ? ”—‘ Give it to the poor : that shouldest thou do.’

The whole was the language of a selfish ungodly man ; and was intended to expose men of this character, even when not chargeable with gross immorality. However, therefore, this man might glory, that the might of his hand had gotten him this wealth, and deem himself wise and happy ; or however he might be envied, respected, or commended by his neighbours ; he was, in the judgment of God, *a fool* ; and God addressed him as a fool. He had foolishly reckoned on many years to come, when he had not a single day to live. He had provided a vast superfluity for a future continuance on earth, which was never to be granted to him : but he had made no provision for the world to come, into which he was immediately to pass ; and in which he was to exist to eternity. For on that very night, his soul was

required of him ; and he must give an account of his ungodliness, selfishness, and covetousness : and then *whose would those things be which he had provided* to the neglect of his soul, and his everlasting ruin ? He could not tell into whose hands his wealth would pass. Nor would it be any comfort to him, even for his friends and children to possess it, when he was torn from all which he loved and idolized, and plunged into the pit of destruction : and perhaps, they too were preparing by it for the same dreadful end.

To this parable our Lord added, '*In this state is every one who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.*' All those persons lay up treasure *for themselves*, who seek riches either for their own sake ; or for the influence and consequence which they bestow ; or to spend in the pride of life and luxurious indulgence ; or in order to aggrandize their families : but who are not rich in faith, in wisdom, in grace, in good works, and in a heavenly treasure. Every man of this character is, in God's account, *a fool*. His life is vanity and vexation ; his success, an empty bubble, or a destructive delusion ; and his end, most miserable.

Let it, then, be our labour, that a covetous desire of the enjoyments of the world may not engage us in pursuits that will be fatal to our souls. Let us seriously consider the true value of things ; and reflect how little riches can do to make us happy if we obtain them ; and how very uncertain that life is, on the continuance of which our possession of them does so evidently depend. But, alas, how many are there, who are now as deeply engaged in their worldly schemes, as this Rich Fool in the parable, to whom God will, in a few weeks, or days, if not *this very night*, say, by the awful voice of his irresistible providence, *Thy soul is required of thee !* And then, what will all these treasures do to purchase life, or to allay the agonies of death ? So far will they be found from being capable of this, that they will rather serve to increase and embitter the surprise and anguish of those agonies.

Let it therefore be our care that we may be *rich towards God* ; rich in works of piety and charity. So shall we safely consign over our treasure to the bank of heaven, and shall be enriched by it, when we leave the world as naked as we entered upon it ; and

lose all but what has been so wisely and happily spent. (SCOTT. DODDRIDGE.)

The danger of delaying repentance: LUKE, xiii. 6-9.

6. A CERTAIN man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found not. 7. Then said he unto the vine-dresser, 'Behold these three years, I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why does it not only not bear fruit, but also render useless the ground by drawing to itself the nourishment of the adjacent vines?' 8. But the vine-dresser answered and said unto him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about the root of it, and lay dung in the trenches: 9, and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, after that thou shalt cut it down.' (Deut. xx. 19.)

OUR Lord, having rejected the harsh and uncharitable construction which some hasty judges would put on the unfortunate men crushed under the falling tower or massacred in the Temple, diverts the attention of his hearers more immediately to themselves; and urges those occurrences which had too hastily been deemed judicial visitations for some atrocious guilt, into an argument for repentance; lest these censorious judges, in their national capacity, should be crushed by a heavier fall, and be slain more miserably in the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

1. The first thing set forth in the parable, is the favourable situation of the fig-tree. While the heathen nations might be compared to those fig-trees which grow by the side of the highway, without culture, unprotected from accidental injuries; the Jews are represented by a fig-tree, planted and gradually reared by the hand of the Almighty, within the sacred enclosure of his own vineyard; a situation most favourable for producing abundantly the best fruits.

2. The next thing represented in the parable, is the expectation entertained by the proprietor: *he sought fruit and found none*. The Jews often made an ostentatious show of zeal for the honour of God, but without any pious disposition of mind. And yet God had not been too hasty or unreasonable in his expectations: he had vouchsafed many signal interpositions

of love, in behalf of his people : he had sent many messages by prophets : he had rescued them from many adversaries : he had given them a Law. But the fig-tree, so far from being profitable to the owner, was hurtful to the growth of the neighbouring trees, by intercepting the nourishment of the soil. The supercilious pride of the Jews had excited against them the prejudices of the heathens ; and so far from worshipping with pure and holy minds, they had reached such a height of wickedness that their own historian thought that Titus was an instrument of God's anger, instead of their being swallowed up by an earthquake. It became necessary to remove the Jews, in order to the establishment of a more pure and efficacious Church.

3. The keeper of the vineyard earnestly intercedes. 'Sir, let it alone this year also.' He enforces his request with a promise of bestowing additional labour and attention. The whole history of our Saviour's life shews the intense eagerness of his wish to prevent the destruction of the Jewish nation. He besought them, even with tears, to consider the things belonging to their peace, before they were hid from their eyes. His apostles, after his Ascension, did not turn to the Gentiles, while any hope remained of softening the obstinacy of the Jews.

The destruction of the Jewish Church declares what returns God expects from having bestowed spiritual privileges. Though the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church of Christ, yet particular Churches may have their candlestick removed, and be cut off, as unfruitful branches, from the parent-vine. "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation, bringing forth the fruits thereof." From this admonition, which of us, as an individual member of the Church, may not learn a lesson ? Have we not long been planted in God's vineyard, and favoured with the cultivation of his ordinances, yea, with the dews of his grace too ; and yet, how little fruit have we borne in proportion to those advantages ? How long has he come seeking it in vain, while we have frustrated the most reasonable expectations, perhaps not only for *three*, but several of us for more than *thirty* years ? Wonderful is it, that the dreadful sentence has not long since gone forth against us, 'Cut them down, why cumber they the ground.' We owe it to the intercession of our blessed Redeemer, the Great Keeper of the

garden of God, that this has not long since been our case. Let us not be high-minded but fear! (Rom. xi. 20.) Let barren sinners reflect, that this may be the last year, perhaps indeed the last month, or last day, of their trial; for even now also is the axe laid to the root of the tree! (Matt. iii. 10.) And let them remember that though "there be hope of a tree, when it is cut down, that it may sprout again" (Job, xiv. 7), yet, when the doom is executed on them, "their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will go up like dust" (Isa. v. 24); and "every tree which brings not forth good fruit, will be hewn down and cast into the fire." (DODDRIDGE. GRAY.)

Parable of the Sower, with our Lord's explanation. MATTHEW, xiii. 3-8, 18-23; MARK, iv. 3-8, 13-25; LUKE, viii. 5-8, 11-18.

Matt. 3, 4; Mark, 3, 4; Luke, 5: Hearken: behold, a sower went forth to sow his seed. And it came to pass while he was sowing, some seed fell by the side of the high-road; and lying uncovered, it was trodden under foot; or the birds of the air came and devoured it.

Matt. 5, 6; Mark, 5, 6; Luke, 6: And some seed fell upon rocky places, where the rock lay beneath the surface; and the seed had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had not to make way through a depth of earth. But when the sun shone, it was scorched; and withered away as soon as it was sprung up, because it had no deep root in a shallow soil, and lacked moisture.

Matt. 7; Mark, 7; Luke, 7: And some fell on a soil among the roots of thorns which had not been taken up: and the thorns sprang up with the seed; and by occupying room and nourishment, choked the seed, and it yielded no fruit.

Matt. 8; Mark, 8; Luke, 8: And other seed fell on good ground, and yielded fruit; which grew up and increased; and some produced thirty; some, sixty; some, a hundred-fold.

Matt. 18, 19; Mark, 14, 15; Luke, 11, 12: The parable is this: the seed which the sower soweth, is the word of God. And these are they by the way-side, where the word is sown: but when

any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and pays not attention to it; then Satan, that wicked one, cometh immediately, and catcheth away the word which was sown in his heart, lest they should believe, and be saved. This is the man who [the seed which] was sown by the way-side.

Matt. 20, 21; Mark, 16, 17; Luke, 13: And in like manner, these are they who received the seed on rocky places: who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness: but have no root in themselves, and so believe and endure but for a time; and afterward, in a time of trial, when oppression or persecution arises for the word's sake, they are immediately offended, and apostatize.

Matt. 20-22; Mark, 18, 19; Luke, 14: And these are they that received seed among thorns: such as hear the word; but as soon as they have heard it, go forth; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of this life, and desires of other things, entering into their minds, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful: yea, they are choked; and bring no fruit to perfection.

Matt. 23; Mark, 20; Luke, 15: And these are they who received seed into good ground: such as hear the word, and attend to it, and receive and keep it in an honest and good heart; and bring forth fruit with perseverance; some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold.

THIS parable, like many others, is prophetic, as well as instructive: it predicts the different sorts of reception, with which the Christian religion will meet from different men. And as this prediction is completely verified by the present state of religion, it affords one very decisive proof of Christ's power of foreseeing future events; and establishes the truth of his pretensions, and the divine authority of his religion. The four different classes of men, here described, comprehend all religious or irreligious characters.

I. By those *who received seed by the way-side*, are meant persons whose minds, like the beaten high-road, are hard, impenetrable, and inaccessible to conviction. Some who have imbibed deeply-rooted prejudices against Christianity, either conceiving themselves superior to the rest of mankind in genius and pene-

tration, erect favourite systems of their own, which they conceive to be the very perfection of human wisdom ; or, on the other hand, having implicitly adopted the opinions of modern philosophers, whom they consider as the great oracles of the age, receive ridicule as argument, assertion as proof ; and prefer silly witticisms, specious sophistry, and coarse buffoonery, to the simplicity, dignity, and sublimity of the Gospel.

Another description of men, on whom the good seed makes little impression, are the thoughtless, the inattentive, the inconsiderate, the trifling, and the gay. These men, without explicitly rejecting the Gospel, yet in fact never concern themselves about it. It does not enter into their plans of life. Being born of Christian parents, they call themselves Christians ; they attend divine service ; but the instant they leave the church, every idea of religion vanishes out of their thoughts ; the awful prospects of eternity neither excite their hopes nor alarm their fears.

II. When the seed falls on rocky ground, it finds no great difficulty in gaining admission into a little loose earth, scattered over the surface ; it springs up with amazing rapidity ; but no sooner *does the sun rise upon it with its scorching heat, than it withers away for want of depth of earth, root, and moisture.*

What a lively representation is this of unstable Christians ! They receive Christianity at first with gladness ; and are extremely ready to be made eternally happy. But when they find that they must give up their favourite interests, and sometimes even pluck out a right eye or tear off a right arm ; that they must take up their cross and follow a crucified Saviour through many difficulties and persecution ; their ardour and alacrity are instantly extinguished. Being deficient in soundness of principle, and sincerity of faith, they depart from their allegiance to their divine Master and Redeemer.

III. A third portion of the seed falls on soil, from which the careless husbandman had not grubbed up the roots of thorns. The fault of this soil is not that of bearing nothing, but of bearing vile and worthless productions, which choke the good seed. These are they who *when they have heard, depart ; and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.* In their youth, perhaps, they receive

religious principles; but no sooner do they *go forth*, and leave those persons from whom they receive them, than they are overwhelmed with business; they are devoted to amusement; they are immersed in sensuality; they are idolaters of wealth, of power, of glory, of fame: and if any accidental thought of religion happens to cross their way, they instantly dismiss the unbidden, unwelcome guest, with the answer of Felix to Paul, "Go thy way for this time: when we have a convenient season, we will send for thee."

Lastly: in contemplating the seed which fell on good ground, we see that the principal qualification for hearing the word of God, is an *honest and good heart*: that is, a heart clear from prejudice, from pride, and self-conceit; a heart sincerely desirous to find the truth, and to acknowledge its own ignorance, weakness, and corruption; a heart such as the little children possessed whose approach was encouraged by our blessed Lord, as the emblems of humility and docility.

We are reminded in this part of the parable, that the good ground *brings forth fruit with patience*. The Christian husbandman does not hold seed and sickle at the same time. Godliness is not a weed, which springs up after one shower: it is a delicate plant, which requires care in cultivation. Good resolutions precede virtuous efforts; and many efforts are necessary to form one habit.

Again: we are assured that God accepteth according to what a man hath. Our deeds are estimated not by the greatness of our performance, but by the sincerity of the effort. If we cannot bring forth *a hundred-fold*, God will accept *of sixty*: if we cannot bring forth sixty, God will accept *of thirty*. But this merciful allowance is intended to quicken our endeavours, so that if we have hitherto brought forth *thirty*, we may strive to attain to *sixty*, and to *a hundred*: thus forgetting what is behind, we may press forward to the high prize of our calling in Christ Jesus.

The concluding words of our Lord, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, should awaken within us a salutary alarm. In the parable, of those to whom the Gospel was offered, three rejected it; one only accepted it. This fearful disparity is the stronger reason for praying, that the Lord of the harvest would

give us grace to hear meekly his word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. [PORTEUS, chiefly.]

Parable of the Tares. MATTHEW, xiii. 24-30.

24. *The kingdom of heaven* [the Gospel-dispensation] *may be compared to the circumstance of a man's sowing good seed in his ground. But in the silence of night while men are sleeping, an enemy of his came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way without detection. 26. But when the blade was sprung up, and began to ear, then the tares also appeared. 27. And the servants of the Master came and said to him, 'Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares?' 28. And he said to them, 'An enemy hath done this.' And the servants said to him, 'Wilt thou then that we go and collect them?' 29. But he said, 'No: lest while ye collect the tares, ye should root up some of the wheat with them: 30, let both grow together till the harvest; and at harvest-time, I will say to the reapers, 'Collect first the tares, and bind them in bundles, in order to burn them as fuel: but gather ye the wheat into my granary.'*

The Greek word translated by *tares*, denotes a sort of degenerate wheat, which originally was a right seed: but in process of time, neither large in ear, nor valuable in corn: A. CLARKE.

By the mixture of wheat and tares, we are to understand a mixture of good and bad men, not only in the world, but also in the Christian world. By *the kingdom of heaven*, is here meant the state of the Gospel, and the Church of Christ. *The man who sows good seed* in his field, is Christ who preaches the Gospel to the world. *The good seed* are they who embrace his doctrine, and conform their lives to it. Amongst the good seed spring up *tares*; that is, wicked persons join themselves to his servants; and both thus united, constitute, or seem to constitute, one and the same society.

Again: This parable intimates that, in the Church, persons

should arise, whose blind zeal would be hurtful to the common cause. No sooner do the tares appear, than the officious servants of the Householder desire to root them up. We are told in the Parable, that grievous inconveniences would follow such rigorous methods.

1. It cannot be supposed that God hath empowered his servants to destroy all those, who should teach false doctrines or lead irreligious lives ; because the most virtuous would often be the greatest sufferers. Christians being unhappily divided into many sects, and warm men of every sect thinking themselves the only orthodox believers, if they should *all* imagine that they had a commission to cut off the bad, destruction and persecution would never cease ; and the best persons would fall a sacrifice to ignorant and outrageous zeal.

2. No one can be qualified for such an office, unless God should give him a power of knowing the hearts of men. Hypocrisy can conceal itself sometimes from every eye, except that from which nothing is concealed. Judas, in all probability, was like most other sinners in this, that he became not very wicked on a sudden ; yet he seems to have escaped suspicion ; so that when Christ declared to his disciples, that one of them should betray him, they were surprised, and could not tell of whom he spake.

3. If God should take sudden vengeance of all bad men, we should be deprived of that freedom from compulsion which attends a reasonable service. The motives to obedience are now more suited to our nature. A great and a distant reward is set before us ; great, to excite our desires ; distant and unseen, to exercise our faith. A punishment is threatened, sufficient to alarm our fears, because it is dreadful ; but it is not immediately inflicted ; and therefore it forceth not ; it only dissuades.

4. The good and the bad are so closely united by worldly dependencies, that the ruin of the one would be the ruin of both. There are many persons in Christian countries, who, if their opinions and actions were tried by the rules of the Gospel, must of necessity be deemed very bad Christians ; and yet have skill in arts and sciences, in commerce, in war, and in politics. Such persons may so far conduce to the temporal prosperity of the nation to which they belong, that, without a miracle, it

could not subsist, if they were all cut off. For the sake of the righteous, therefore, God may permit such persons to pass their days with them ; and with them, to enjoy the common blessings of providence.

II. We may observe further, that from the mixture of good and bad men many advantages arise to both.

1. The oppressions and persecutions which the righteous sometimes endure from the wicked, cannot be denied to be no small inconveniencies ; and yet these very inconveniencies must be acknowledged proper trials of virtue, which appears to the best advantage, when it struggles with difficulties. A good man, thus proved, is often of singular service to mankind ; his reputation and its influence, through following ages, allure many to imitate those excellent qualities which they cannot but admire.

2. There are other trials, less violent indeed, but perhaps not less dangerous, to which the good are exposed by dwelling amongst the bad. Irreligious persons endeavour to corrupt the minds of those with whom they converse, and upon all occasions discourage and ridicule piety. These trials give good men an opportunity of testifying their sincerity and their constancy ; which could not show themselves to the same advantage, if impiety and immorality were accounted infamous, and obliged to conceal themselves from public view.

3. The good, by their intercourse with the bad, may often be the occasion of reclaiming them. Good example allures to imitation. There are also many blessings, which by the divine providence, attend upright behaviour. They who have not departed from righteousness so far as to fall into the extremes of vice, have opportunities of seeing this ; and by seeing it, they sometimes become sensible of their error, and seriously wish that they were also in the favour of God. These honest desires may be to them the beginning of wisdom, and the forerunners of amendment.

4. What an unspeakable advantage is this, both to those who are rescued from eternal destruction, and to those who are the blessed instruments of saving their souls ! What an honour is it to be an useful servant, and a good steward in God's family, and even a fellow-labourer with Jesus Christ !

5. The good, by dwelling amongst the wicked, have an opportunity of observing the unhappy situation of those notorious sinners, who have a body worn out with intemperance; an understanding sunk beneath a brute; a mind tormented with furious passions, the seat of desires which cannot be satisfied, and of fears which are well grounded. The person who carries about with him this wretched mixture of sin and misery, is a living argument against iniquity; and an unwilling preacher of righteousness.

6. The advantages which the bad may find from passing their days with the good, are manifest. The patience of God affords them all imaginable motives to amendment. God invites them to return to him by their own consciences, by his revealed will, and by the admonition of his servants. They may see persons of the same rank with themselves, of the same occupation, of the same age, exposed to the same temptations, preferring virtue to vice, and happy in their choice. These are favours which God daily extends to the most unworthy, with no other design than to save them from perdition. But these favours, if insolently abused, will add to their guilt and increase their punishment; and the remembrance of them will be a cause of continual remorse at their departure hence, and in their future state.

Thus it appears that God mercifully and wisely permits this mixture of the good and the bad, for the improvement of the one, and for the amendment of the other. Thus shall it be till the end of the world. Then the state of probation ceases, and the state of retribution begins. There is no longer any reason that persons of such different tempers should inhabit the same place. The wicked will then be banished from the presence of God, and sent to dwell with creatures of the same perverse dispositions;—which alone would be a terrible punishment. The fear even of this should be sufficient to warn us so to behave ourselves here, that hereafter we be not doomed to such cursed society; but may live with God, and with beings who love and imitate him. (ARCHDEACON JORTIN.)

Gradual progress of grace. MARK, iv. 26-29.

26. *So is the kingdom of God, and such the progress of the Gospel-dispensation, as if a man should have cast seed into the ground ; 27, and should sleep by night, and rise by day, passing his life as usual, after having done all in his power in sowing the seed ; and the seed should sprout, and grow up he knoweth not how. (28. For the earth bringeth forth spontaneously, by her own energy, first the blade, then the green ear ; after that, the full corn in the ear.) 29. But when the ripe fruit delivers itself to the sower (v. 26) he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*

THIS parable is recorded by St. Mark only. It was probably intended to encourage the apostles to persevere in their labours, though they were not attended with immediate success.

All teachers in the Church of Christ, all godly parents, all Christian friends, derive from this parable much encouragement. The advice which they urge, in their respective vocations, may seem to be lost on obdurate hearts ; but let them take courage respecting the final result : their pious admonitions are seeds, which, by God's blessing, may grow and spring up they know not how. Let them not despair in their Christian course ; but pray that God, in his own good time, may bring the humble work to perfection. When the father shall have been carried to his grave, the son may revert, in gratitude and repentance, to former lessons ; whereby the parent, though dead, yet speaketh. These friendly reproofs and affectionate counsels may, like bread cast upon the waters, be found after many days.

We may trace in this parable a beautiful representation of the gradual progress of grace in the soul, represented by the seed, which imperceptibly vegetates, peeps above the surface, springs higher and higher, and produces first the verdant blade, then the ear, afterwards the grain, gradually filling the ear, till it arrives at maturity ; and is then reaped and collected into the store-house. God, being a God of order, does not work but in order, and by degrees ; bringing men from one extreme to the other by middle courses ; and therefore, seldom brings a man from the wretchedness of forlorn nature to the blessed estate of saving grace, but where first he does, by his restrain-

ing grace, in some good measure, correct nature and moralize it. "The path of the just" (says Solomon) "is as the shining light; *that shineth more and more* unto the perfect day." This corresponds not only with St. Peter's injunction, "*Grow in grace*;" but with his representation of the Christian character as combining an assemblage of excellent qualities, the result of *habitual practice*: "giving *all diligence*, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." St. Paul did not consider himself, even at a very advanced period of his ministry, as having yet attained to Christian perfection; but "*forgetting those things which were behind, he reached forth unto those things which were before.*" He exhorts the Corinthians, "So run that ye may obtain." He prays for the Philippians, that their love might abound yet *more and more* in knowledge and in all judgment.

If our sanctification be thus a progressive work, it seems almost necessarily that it commences with our Christian life. The injunction to "*grow in grace*" presupposes that there is a spiritual principle already implanted within us; and as the exhortations of St. Peter and St. Paul are addressed to Christians in general, without exceptions of any kind, it is to be presumed that all who have been admitted into the Christian covenant, had this principle actually bestowed on them, immediately upon their entrance into that covenant; or, in other words, at the instant of their baptism. This is that regeneration or new birth, or commencement of our spiritual life, spoken of in Scripture, as the common privilege of every Christian. It were in vain to exhort individuals to grow or improve in their spiritual state, unless there were this vital spark within them, ready to put forth its energies. Our Church, accordingly, invariably connects baptism with regeneration; considering every member of the Church, whether adult or infant, as thereby made partaker of all the spiritual benefits of the Gospel, according to their respective capacities of receiving them; and thenceforth assured of sufficient help and strength to fulfil the covenanted engagements.

At the same time, the injunctions to grow in grace warn us, that the help bestowed must be faithfully and diligently ap-

plied to the purpose intended. Baptism places us in a state of salvation ; but does not perfect us in that state, nor preclude the possibility of apostasy and perdition. Regeneration, therefore, must not be confounded with final perseverance : it is the seminal principle only of holiness and virtue, which are to be brought [*gradually*] to perfection by subsequent supplies from the same heavenly source, accompanied with proportionate exertions on our part to render them effectual.

If grace be thus progressive in its nature, it is a dangerous error to conceive, that at any period of life, or under any circumstances of apparent proficiency in spiritual attainments, we may presume upon an absolute assurance of obtaining the prize of the high calling that is set before us. The farther we have advanced in our Christian course, the greater probability there may be of our persevering unto the end : but the awful warning of St. Peter may well guard us against any implicit reliance upon *presumptuous* expectations : "It were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." (2 Pet. ii. 21.) (ARCHBISHOP VAN MILDERT, chiefly.)

Miraculous propagation of the Gospel. MATTHEW, xiii. 31, 32 ; MARK, iv. 31, 32 : *THE kingdom of heaven [the conversion of the world to the Christian faith,] is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field : which indeed when it is sown in the earth, is smaller than all seeds : but when it is sown, it rises up, and becometh greater than all the other herbs : yea, it becometh a tree, and shooteth out great branches : so that the birds of the air may come and harbour in the branches thereof, and under its shade.*

'A grain of mustard seed' proverbially denoted a *very small* thing.

The Rabbins state wonderful things respecting the growth of mustard seed. "Rabbi Simeon said, A stalk of mustard seed was in my field, into which I was wont to climb as men do into a fig-tree." One bough is said to have covered the tent of a potter.

THIS parable is prophetic: it predicts the miraculous increase of Christianity, in defiance of impediments on the part of its enemies. While, therefore, it was well calculated to encourage the disciples who, judging the Gospel by its beginning, might have fallen into despair; it also remains, in all ages of the Church militant on earth, a powerful argument for the truth of our holy religion.

For let us consider what the Blessed Jesus proposed to effect, and by what instruments. Our Saviour was to put a period to the rites of Moses, of which the Jews were zealous even unto pertinacity; to reform the manners of all mankind; to confound the wisdom of the Greeks; to break in pieces the power of Satan, and to destroy the worship of all false gods.

But see what was to be believed,—a Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead: a man-God and a God-man; the same person, finite and infinite; born in time, and yet from all eternity the Son of God; but yet born of a woman, and she a virgin, but yet a mother: resurrection of the dead, re-union of soul and body; this was part of the Christian doctrine. But was the morality of Jesus easy? Not to flesh and blood, whose appetites it pretends to restrain, or else to mortify; fasting and humility, loving our enemies, restitution of injuries, and self-denial, and taking up the Cross, and losing all our goods, and giving our life for Jesus. As the doctrine was hard to believe, so the precepts were hard to do.

But for whom, and under whose conduct, was all this to be believed, and all this to be done, and all this to be suffered? Surely for some glorious and mighty prince, whose splendour as far outshines the Roman empire, as the jewels of Cleopatra outshined the swaddling clothes of the Babe at Bethlehem. No; all this was for Jesus, a poor babe, born in a stable; the son of a carpenter; scourged; nailed to a cross. He fell under the malice of the Jews, his countrymen, and the power of his Roman lords, a pitiful sacrifice, without beauty and without splendour. The design is great; but does not yet seem possible. But let us see what instruments the holy Jesus chose, to effect these so mighty changes; to overcome so great enemies; and to master so many impossibilities.

Twelve men of obscure birth, of contemptible trades and

quality, without learning,—these men were sent into the midst of a wise world, to dispute with the most famous philosophers of Greece; to out-preach all the Roman orators; to introduce into a newly-settled empire, which would be impatient of novelties and change, such a change as must destroy all their temples, or remove thence all their gods. Against which change, all the zeal of the world, and all the passions, must needs be violently opposed: a change that introduced new laws, and caused them to reverse the old; to change that religion under which their fathers long did prosper, and under which the Roman empire obtained so great a grandeur, for a religion, which in appearance was humble and meek; teaching peace, and making the soldiers' arms in a manner useless; a religion that gave countenance to the poor; but in a time when riches were adored, and ambition esteemed the greatest nobleness, and pleasure thought to be the chiefest good, it brought no peculiar blessing to the rich or mighty, unless they would become poor and humble in some real sense or other; a religion that would pierce into the secrets of the soul, unravel all the intrigues of hearts, and reform all evil manners.

That such a religion, in such a time, preached by such mean persons, should triumph over the philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the sermons of the eloquent, and the power of princes, and the interest of states, and the inclinations of nature, and the blindness of zeal, and the force of custom, and the pleasures of sin, and the busy arts of Satan; that is, against wit, and power, and money, and religion, and wilfulness, and fame, and empire, which are all the things in the world that can make a thing impossible; this argues a higher cause than the immediate instrument.

Now how a higher power did intervene, is visible and notorious. Jesus had promised, that in a few days he would send down the Holy Ghost upon his apostles: and he fulfilled his word. After ten days, they felt and saw lights of moveable fire sitting upon their heads. And that light did illuminate their hearts: and the mighty rushing wind inspired them with a power of speaking divers languages, and brought to their remembrances all that Jesus did and taught; and made them wise to conduct souls, and bold to venture, and prudent to

advise, and powerful to do miracles, and witty to convince gainsayers, and hugely instructed in the Scriptures; and gave them the spirit of government, and the spirit of prophecy.

This thing was so public, that, at the first notice of it, three thousand souls were converted on that very day, at the very time when it was done. For it was certainly a visible demonstration of an invisible power, that ignorant persons who were never taught, should, in an instant, speak all the languages of the Roman empire. And now the means were proportionable enough to the biggest end. Without learning, the apostles could not confute the learned world; but therefore God became their teacher. Without power, they could not break Satan's violence; but therefore God gave them power. Without courage, they could not contest against all the violence of the Jews and Gentiles; but therefore God was their strength, and gave them fortitude. Without great caution and providence, they could not avoid the traps of crafty persecutors; but therefore God gave them caution, and made them provident. And as Bezaleel and Aholiab received the Spirit of understanding, to enable them to work excellently in the tabernacle; so had the apostles, to make them wise for the work of a diviner tabernacle, which God pitched, not man.

Immediately upon this, the apostles, to make a fulness of demonstration, gave the Spirit to others also; and they spake with tongues and prophesied. They wrought innumerable miracles in the name of Jesus. They desired to be grinded by the teeth of lions; and beheld with joy the fires of persecution, which, like the chair of Elijah, were to bear them into the bosom of their beloved Jesus. They convinced the Jews, out of their own prophets. They prevailed not merely upon poor and humble; but all the disciples of the Baptist; Nicodemus; Joseph of Arimathea; Sergius, the president; Dionysius, an Athenian judge; these and many other converts, eminent for rank and learning, could not be such fools, as upon a matter, not certainly true, but probably false, to unravel their former principles, and to change their liberty for a prison, wealth for poverty, honour for disreputation, life for death; if by such exchange they had not been secured of truth, and holiness, and the will of God.

And now the fame and religion of Jesus were scattered, with

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an incredible swiftness, from one end of the earth to the other. It filled all Asia immediately. It passed presently to Europe, and to the farthest Africans. The Cross was worn upon breasts; carried on banners; and put upon crowns imperial. Who would not have confessed the divinity of Jesus, when he should see the world running to the honour of the poor Nazarene; and kings and queens kissing the feet of the poor servants of Jesus? Could a few fishermen and a publican effect all this, for the son of a poor maiden of Judea? Can we suppose all the world, or so great a part of mankind, can consent by chance, or suffer such changes for nothing, or for anything less than this?

The son of the poor maiden was the Son of God. And the fishermen spake by a Divine Spirit. And they caught the world with holiness and miracles, with wisdom and power, bigger than the strength of all the Roman legions. (BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR.)

Gradual efficacy of the Gospel: MATTHEW, xiii. 33. JESUS spake another parable to them. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and covered up [mixed] in three sata of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

LEAVEN is a piece of dough; but especially that which is salted and soured for fermentation. The bread which was made of dough unsoured and unfermented, was called *unleavened*. A *satum* or *seah* is equivalent to one *peck* and one *pint*.

Leaven, in scripture, sometimes represents erroneous doctrines and corrupt examples: "then understood they that he bade them beware of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Matth. xvi. 6-12. Leaven sometimes represents scandalous sinners: "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." 1 Cor. v. 6. Leaven sometimes denotes hypocrisy and corruption generally: "Let us keep the feast not with *old leaven*, neither with the *leaven* of malice and wickedness."

With regard to the present parable, the precise difference between it, and the preceding parable, is, that the former represents the extensive propagation of the Gospel from the smallest beginnings; but this, the nature of the influence of its doctrines

upon the minds of particular persons. The word of God when received into the heart by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, gradually changes the judgment, affections, conduct, and conversation. The thoughts, desires, pursuits, and discourse, become more holy and more spiritual.

From being assured that the fermentation of leaven does not, at once, communicate itself to the whole mass,—the humble Christian is much encouraged not to sink into despair, at his slow advances; but sincerely and warmly to cherish the accorded leaven, in ardent and humble hope of its beneficial consequence and ultimate result. The grace of God gives hopes even to the worst of men; and without this favour, the best of men could have no hopes at all.

A sudden and perfect change from a vicious to a virtuous state is contrary to common experience, and to the nature of habits; and therefore it is not to be supposed that a gracious and merciful God will exact it instantly from the penitent sinner. There are persons who talk much of this immediate transformation from sin to sanctity: but they confound a good resolution with a complete amendment. A good resolution may be formed in an instant, upon some awakening call and pressing motive; but it is the following behaviour which proves the sincerity of the resolution.

But what say the Scriptures, in general, concerning amendment and improvement? They say, *learn to do well*. No one ever learned anything, that is worth the knowing, in an instant: it is a work of time, and a work of pains. The Scriptures say, "*Grow in grace*." Look round all nature, and you shall find that growing is gradual; and as it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual growth, which, like a small grain of mustard seed, becomes a tall shrub; but days and nights must first pass over its head.

If the parable be considered in reference to the progress of Christianity, we are admonished not to become weary of being humble instruments, by personal exertion or by pecuniary aid, of diffusing the knowledge of Jesus Christ over heathen countries. For though the doctrines of the Gospel, when first proposed, seemed to be lost in that enormous mass of passions and worldly thoughts with which men's minds were filled; yet did they then most eminently exert their influence, converting men's thoughts

and desires and cares, into a conformity to truth. The moral habits of the early converts, when contrasted with their former corruptions, were considered no less a miracle, than if the ears of the deaf had been opened, or the lame had thrown away his crutch. What has been, can be. The arm of God is not shortened : he will prosper the labour which tends to his glory. The leaven will work.

But to look abroad upon others generally, does not weaken the necessity of looking upon ourselves individually. If a little leaven leavens the whole lump ; how important, in reference to the general progress of Christianity, is the conduct of each single Christian, to the edification of his neighbour and of all mankind. As the virtue of the leaven is communicated by degrees, from one particle of the meal to another ; and as each portion of the mass serves, when good, to assist in the working, or when bad, to prevent its success ; so may each individual amongst ourselves, if faithless, hinder the zeal of the rest ; or if devout, help forward their proficiency. First we act on those more near us ; on those we live with and love most intimately. Through them, we have influence on their friends ; and again, through them on theirs. Our sins, then, never come single. Besides offending God, we hurt also our neighbour. We do, as far as in us lies, by every act of transgression, hinder the salvation of them who witness it. Besides sinning ourselves, we encourage them to sin. Besides perishing, we lead them to perish. (GIRDLESTONE. JORTIN.)

Parables of the hidden Treasure and precious Pearl. MATTHEW, xiii. 44-46.

THE kingdom of heaven [or the Gospel-dispensation] is like treasure [or a mine] hid in a field : which when a man has casually found, he covered up and hid : and for joy of it, he privately departs, and sells all whatsoever he hath, and buyeth that field.

The kingdom of heaven may be illustrated by the similitude of a travelling-merchant, seeking to purchase pearls : who finding one pearl of an exceeding great value, departed, and sold all whatsoever he had, and bought it.

The practice, in the East, of concealing property under ground as a means of security ; and the inordinate value attached by the ancients to pearls, may be seen in Greswell's learned *Dissertations*, vol. ii. p. 217.

BOTH these parables suggest, in several points, the same reflections ; such as the excellence of the Gospel, and the sacrifices necessary to procure it. The two parables have some differences : the treasure in the field was lighted upon casually ; the pearl was an object of laborious research.

In directing a more immediate attention to the parable of the treasure or mine found in a field, the following inferences are among the more obvious.

1. The salvation, provided by the Gospel, is of inestimable value. Christ is the true treasure. In him there is abundance of all that is rich and useful. In him (St. Paul assures us) are all *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* ; even the wisdom which is true wisdom ; since the worship of the true God, and the mode of his being reconciled to us, were proofs of our spiritual ignorance, previously to the instructions of the great Teacher, Christ. One effect of a lively faith is to look upon salvation as our only treasure ; and value, beyond all the riches of the world, the grace which causes us to seek after it.

2. The world is the field, in which this treasure is *hid*. The reason why so many slight the Gospel, is because they look only upon the surface of the field, and see no excellency in the Christian institutes, above those of the philosophers. The Gospel is thus a hidden treasure to all such as will not study its evidences, and thereby have their eyes judicially closed from seeing the wondrous things of God's law. The blessings of the Gospel suffice to render us rich to all eternity : these are contained in the holy scriptures : yet multitudes have access to them, without being aware of the unsearchable riches they contain.

3. The man, in the parable, *found* the treasure. The grace of the Gospel is a free gift which precedes all human endeavour. No merit of ours deserved it. The servants of sin and the children of wrath could expect no other wages than what sin pays to its wretched slaves, even spiritual death. "Ye are saved by grace : and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God."

4. When the man had found the treasure, he concealed his discovery. To *hide* the treasure found, what is it but to cover received grace under the veil of humility ; and not to be puffed up with the light sent from above ; nor make proud boast of divine consolations and revelations ; lest vainglory corrupt the true. St. Paul said, " It was not expedient for him to glory : " though no one might have so much cause as he had for it : he speaks of a man, as if it had not been himself, caught up into Paradise ; and not that mention made either, till fourteen years after. It is a sure rule that to whatsoever heights of piety any man pretends, it is of Satan, unless the greater the pretence be, the greater also be the humility of the man.

5. The discovery of the treasure was a cause of *joy* : for joy thereof. Great is the *spiritual* exultation of the Christian, on discovering the riches of the Gospel. How glad was Abraham when he saw the ram which was an exchange for Isaac his son ! How glad was Hagar when she saw the fountain, wherewith she refreshed both herself and her babe ! How glad, then, should we be that we see a lamb, the Lamb of God, who offereth himself to be a ransom for us ! How glad should we be that we see the well, the well of living waters, which only can quench our thirst ! (BISHOP LAKE, quoted by FORD.)

6. The man who found the treasure and the merchant who found the pearl, went and sold all that they had. In the same manner, when a man is brought to a sense of his spiritual condition, and becomes in earnest about eternal life, he searches the word of God with greater care ; and having discovered the treasure, he resolves to obtain it, at any rate. He renounces all hopes, claims, pursuits, interests, pleasures, which are incompatible with salvation. He knows that he must go to the price of the whole religion of the Scriptures, and receive Christ in all respects, if he would be saved and enriched by him. Nothing indeed can be given as the *price* of salvation : yet much must be given up for the sake of it. This is implied in *purchasing* the field or the pearl. Spiritual joy is a motive and stimulus to our renouncing the world. " How delightful and sweet to my soul is the privation of my former delight in things of no value ! How is it become my very joy to abandon that which I dreaded most to lose ! For Thou didst cast them from me, Thou true and chief delight ; and didst thyself enter in their stead ; sweeter to

my soul than all enjoyment." (ST. AUGUSTINE, quoted by FORD.)

The parable of the pearl is nearly of the same import as that of the mine or hidden treasure. Our Lord in adopting the *pearl* as an emblem of evangelical worth, uses a comparison deriving its force from the almost incredible value which the ancients attached to pearls. In one sense, every man is *a merchant seeking goodly pearls*: one man would be rich; another, honourable; another, learned; but these are either debased or even counterfeit pearls, when compared with the preciousness of Christ. Those merchants who compass sea and land for temporal gain, condemn the slothfulness of the majority of those called Christians; who, though they confess eternal salvation from sin to be the most excellent of all treasures, yet seek worldly possessions in preference to it. Alas, for him who expects to find anything more amiable than God, more worthy to fill his heart, and more capable of making him happy. (SCOTT. QUESNEL. A. CLARKE. HENRY FORD, on *Matthew*.)

Christ having given directions (vv. 15-17) for the reconciliation of differences between general disciples, Peter consults him on the subject of forgiveness of injuries. Our Lord replies, by uttering the parable of the Unforgiving Servant. MATTHEW, xviii. 21-35.

21, 22. *THEN came Peter to him, and said, 'Lord, how oft shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him the offence? till seven times?' Jesus saith unto him, 'I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven.'*

23-25. *Therefore, in respect to this question, the kingdom of heaven [or the government of the Messiah] may be illustrated by the instance of a certain king, who having various collectors of revenue under him, determined to settle accounts with his officers. 24. And when he began to reckon, there was brought unto him one who had so abused his trust, that he owed him ten thousand talents. 25. But forasmuch as he was unable to pay the debt, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all his property; and the debt to be paid.*

26. *Then the servant prostrated himself at his feet, saying,*

'Lord, have patience with me; and I will pay thee all.' 27. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and released him from punishment, and forgave him the debt.

28. But the same servant went out from the presence of his lord, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred denarii: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me that thou owest.' 29. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' 30. And he would not have patience; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly grieved and indignant: and went, and gave an exact account unto their lord, of all the things which had occurred.

32. Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, 'O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me: 33, oughtest thou not also to have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?' 34. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the jailors,

[or tormentors] till he should pay all that was due to him.

35. In the same manner, will my heavenly Father do unto you, unless ye, from your hearts, forgive every one his brother their trespasses.

v. 21: *Seven times* is a Hebrew idiom for *very often*.—v. 24: the Jewish *talent* was equivalent to 138*l.*; the Roman *denarius*, to seven pence halfpenny.—v. 25: By the Jewish law, debtors with their whole family might be *sold* for the payment of debts.—v. 34, debtors were often subjected to *torture*, in order to extort the confession of having concealed treasures; or to excite the compassion of relatives, who might be thus induced to pay the debts of the sufferer. See TRENCH, p. 155.

1. The object of this parable is not only to enforce the duty of cultivating a placable disposition, but a disposition *constantly* placable; always ready to forgive the offences of our brother, however frequently he may repeat those offences. For it was immediately after our Lord had told Peter that he was to forgive his brother *not merely seven times*, but *seventy times seven*,

that he added this parable. This will to many people appear a hard saying ; and will not very well agree with that keen sense of injuries, which too generally prevails ; and which, instead of forgiving repeated offences, will listen to no expressions of contrition, even for a single one. But are you then content that your heavenly Father should deal out the same measure to you that you mete to your brother ? Are you content that one single offence should exclude you for ever from the arms of his mercy ? Are you not every day heaping up sin upon sin ? Do not you stand as much in need of daily forgiveness as you do of your daily bread ; and do you think it an *excess* of indulgence, an overstrained degree of tenderness and compassion, that your Maker should pardon you seven times a-day, or even seventy times seven ?

2. This parable is a practical comment on that petition in the Lord's Prayer, "*forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ;*" and it shows what infinite stress our Divine Master lays on this duty of forgiveness, by the care he takes to enforce it in so many different ways ; by this parable ; by making it a part of our daily prayers ; and by his repeated declarations that we must expect no mercy from our Maker, "*unless we from our hearts forgive every one his brother their trespasses.*" To the same purpose, are those irresistible words of St. Paul (Eph. iv. 32) : "*Be ye, therefore, kind one to another, tender-hearted ; forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.*" Let the hard-hearted unrelenting man of the world, or the obdurate unforgiving parent, advert to these repeated admonitions ; and then let him, if he can, indignantly spurn from him the repenting offender, entreating pardon at his feet in those heart-piercing words, "*Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*"

3. Lastly, is it not dreadful to consider what very little regard is paid to this precept by a large part of mankind !

No man ever heard or read the parable before us without feeling his indignation rise against the ungrateful and unfeeling servant ; who, after having a debt of ten thousand talents remitted to him by his indulgent lord, threw his fellow-servant into prison, for a debt of an hundred pence. And yet how frequently are we ourselves guilty of the very same offence !

Who is there among us that has not had ten thousand

talents forgiven him by his heavenly Father? Take together all the offences of his life, all his sins and follies from the first hour of his maturity to the present time, and they may well be compared to this immense sum; which immense sum, if he has been a sincere penitent, has been all forgiven through the merits of his Redeemer. Yet when his fellow-Christian owes him an hundred pence, when he commits the slightest offence against him; he too often refuses him forgiveness, though he fall at his feet to implore it.

In fact, do we not every day see men resenting not only real injuries, but slight and even imaginary offences, with extreme vehemence and passion, and sometimes punishing the offender with nothing less than death? Do we not even see families rent asunder, and all domestic tranquillity and comfort destroyed frequently by the most trivial causes, sometimes on one side, and sometimes on both, refusing to listen to any reasonable overtures of peace, haughtily rejecting all offers of reconciliation, insisting on the highest possible satisfaction and submission, and carrying these sentiments of implacable rancour with them to the grave? And yet these persons call themselves Christians; and expect themselves to be forgiven at the throne of mercy.

Let, then, every man of this description most seriously reflect on this parable. Let him remember, that the unforgiving servant was *delivered over to the tormentors, till he should pay the uttermost farthing*. Let him feel himself to be precisely in the situation of that very servant; and that, of course, he must, at the last tremendous day, expect that bitter and unanswerable reproach from his offended Judge; "*O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*" (PORTEUS.)

Our Lord replies to the question, Who is my neighbour?
LUKE, x. 25-37.

While our Lord was discoursing with his seventy Disciples, *behold, a certain man, an interpreter of the Law*, being attracted by the fame of Jesus as a divinely-commissioned Teacher, *stood*

up, and made trial of him, anxiously consulting him, and saying, *O Teacher, What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

[That the Pentateuch is not wholly destitute of intimations relative to so great a blessing, appears from many occurrences in the Book of Genesis, and from the declaration of Christ himself in one of his disputations with the Sadducees. (*Matthew*, xxii. 32.) But as the promises of *life* are more numerous in regard to length of a *temporal* existence, the Lawyer was pardonably solicitous in requesting a clearer announcement of the blessing. Our Lord proceeds to make the questionist resolve his own doubts.]

26. *Jesus said to him, What is written on this subject, in the Law, of which thou art an expounder? In what sense readest thou the case?*

[To the memory of the Lawyer, seems to have occurred some such passage as this: 'Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, *he shall live in them.*' (*Levit.* xviii. 5.) And from among the general body of those statutes, his sagacity and sincerity of purpose enabled him to quote and combine two passages in one answer: the former from Deuteronomy (vi. 5); the latter from Leviticus (xix. 18.)]

27. *And the Lawyer answered and said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind:—and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

28. *And as our Lord himself based all the Law and the Prophets, all duties to God and man, upon the conjoint love of God and our neighbour, Jesus said unto him, Thou hast answered rightly: do this; and thou shalt live: thou shalt obtain eternal life, the object of thy enquiry.*

The obligation of *loving God* was clear and obvious to the Lawyer: but as the *love of the stranger* (*Levit.* xix. 33; *Deut.* x. 18) is not so often inculcated as the love of an Israelite neighbour, the Jewish doctors had almost restricted the term *neighbour* to their fellow-countrymen. 29. The Lawyer, therefore, anxious to make himself righteous in the completion of legal righteousness as the means of *inheriting eternal life*, asks the additional question, *And who is my neighbour?*

30. *And Jesus answered and said, A certain man of Jerusalem was going down to Jericho; and he fell in with robbers who*

stripped him of his raiment; and inflicted blows upon him; and departed, leaving him half dead.

31. *And by coincidence, there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he crossed the road, and went on.*

32. *And likewise, a Levite, when he was near to the place, came and saw him, and passed by on the farther side, for fear of being legally polluted.*

33-35. *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him; and went to him, and bandaged his wounds, pouring into them oil and wine; and set him on his own beast; and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow, when he was departing, he produced from his purse two denarii; and gave them to the landlord, and said unto him, 'Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I will repay thee, as I come back.'*

36. *Which now of these three persons, thinkest thou, as to the fulfilment of duty, was the neighbour of this man who fell in with the robbers?* 37. *And he said, He that discharged the compassion towards him. Then Jesus said unto him, Go and do thou likewise: imitate what thou approvest: acknowledge as a neighbour whoever needs thy aid.*

v. 30. To go to a metropolis is usually expressed by *going up*; to leave it, by *going down*.

v. 30. The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was infested with robbers; and from the frequency of *murders*, was termed the *Bloody Way*.

v. 31. A considerable number of Priests resided at Jericho, when not occupied in the Temple-service.

v. 34. A mixture of wine and oil was used as a medicament, by the ancient surgeons.

The hatred of the Jews against the Samaritans was chiefly of a religious nature. When the ten tribes had been carried into captivity, the Assyrian king peopled Samaria with mixed colonists, who, on their arrival among Jews, did not wholly renounce their ancient idolatry. This animosity was aggravated by the opposition which the Samaritans made, when the Jews, returning from captivity, were employed in erecting the second Temple. When the High-Priest Manasseh had been deprived of his

office, in consequence of marrying the daughter of Sanballat, the Assyrian Governor of Samaria, his father-in-law so far espoused his cause as to erect a rival temple on Mount Gerizim.

v. 35. The *two denarii* (15*d.*) would not have been mentioned, if they had been unequal to the landlord's outlay for a few days.

THE parable of the Samaritan tends to illustrate the doctrine of Christian benevolence.

1. The charity of the Samaritan was *prompt*: to see the wounded traveller was the prelude to relieve him by laborious and immediate exertion. "If a brother be destitute of daily food; and one of you say to him, 'Depart in peace, be thou filled;' notwithstanding ye give him not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" True benevolence does not evaporate in fruitless sighs and wishes; but prompts us to render to the wretched some immediate services. The Samaritan saw; and he relieved.

2. Benevolence must be void of ostentation. In the conduct of the Samaritan, we see nothing of the spirit of the Pharisees, who *did their alms before men to be seen of men*: he had no other spectator than God. Such mean and mercenary views tarnish the beauty and depreciate the value of beneficent actions, rendering them specious and splendid appearances of goodness, while they are indeed nothing more than sacrifices to vanity and self-applause. For this reason, our Saviour recommends unaffected modesty and humility as necessary to our deeds of charity: for while, under this comely veil, they lie concealed from the view of men, they shine with brighter lustre in the eyes of God; who judgeth not according to the outward appearance, but looketh on the heart and reins.

3. The charity of the Samaritan was systematic. The Samaritan not only exerted himself to the utmost of his power for the present relief of this unfortunate stranger; but made the best provision he could for his future recovery. How unlike in temper and character, to those whose goodness "is as the morning cloud, and the early dew which quickly passeth away." The love of many is of so unsteady a nature, that it soon waxeth cold after the first transport is over; and like a flash of lightning, it blazes, and is extinguished in a moment.

4. The charity of the Samaritan was devoid of excuse. Sometimes we urge the hardness of the times; the expenses of our family; the pressure of taxation; and a variety of excuses which are so far valid, when they are not contradicted by real selfishness or by our sacrifices to worldly vanities: these are points which must be referred to a Christian conscience. The Samaritan might have urged, that his own money was not more than sufficient for his journey; that he was in an enemy's country; that others would not stop to discharge the offices of kindness to himself. But the Samaritan was deaf to all the pleas of fear, of self-interest, or resentment.

5. The charity of the Samaritan was noble, and enlarged in its principle. Such was the religious enmity of the Jews, that they loaded the Samaritans with annual public execrations. But, in the parable, the Samaritan, on the sight of the wounded Jew (easily known by his costume), lent his friendly aid, without listening to any cold and bitter reflections which a difference of religion would have excited in the mind of a Jew, at the sight of a wounded and helpless Samaritan. The word *neighbour*, therefore, is not to be confined to our particular friends or acquaintance; to those who are of the same religious sentiments with ourselves; to such as are members of the same civil society; and of the same country. We ought to account every man our *neighbour*, though a stranger, an enemy, a sinner, one of a different persuasion in religion. Let him be what he will, he is a human creature; and as such, he is entitled to humanity and courtesy in common intercourse; to instruction, if he needs it; to relief and assistance, in the season of his distress.

As the propriety of the parable is evident for explaining the nature and extent of Christian benevolence; so should the authority of the person propounding it, be an indispensable obligation for the observance of the duty. Christ was, indeed, the good Samaritan, who found poor human nature wounded and bound, left more than half-dead, and stripped of all its valuable qualities, by the merciless robber and adversary of souls. His bowels yearned over our distressed condition; and when neither the Levitical Law, nor the sacrifices offered by Jewish priests, had administered any sort of comfort and relief; he came, a stranger, from his blissful dwelling; kindly approached to us; bound up our wounds; poured out his soul unto death;

and applied the sovereign balsam of his own blood. He raised us, and removed us away into a more saving dispensation; clothed us with his own righteousness as with a robe; and wrought a perfect cure upon us, at the expense of many miracles and mighty condescensions and infinite sufferings to himself. His redeeming offices would not allow him to stay with us, till all the effects of his goodness were accomplished; but he hath left us in the protecting hands of the Comforter, for an unfading supply of spiritual sustenance under maladies.

And ought not such a pattern as this to have the weight of ten thousand arguments with us? How can *they* grudge fit proofs of love to their brethren in distress, towards those of a differing judgment or unkind behaviour, or most wrongful malice; when herein chiefly God commendeth his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us? For this inestimable benefit and love, all honour, praise, and obedience, be unto him who hath left us an example that we should follow his steps. (Dr. GRAY. DEAN STANHOPE.)

Our Lord foretells, in the parable of the Great Supper, the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. LUKE, xiv. 14-24.

[The guest, mentioned in verse 15, seems to have anticipated the glory and enjoyments of the Messiah's temporal kingdom; the blessings of which he supposed (a common notion among the Jews) the ancient *just* men would be *raised up* to enjoy. Felicity was usually expressed by the Jews, under the metaphor of a sumptuous feast.

If the Pharisee's exclamation had arisen from imagining, that the happiness of the Messiah's reign would be confined to the descendants of Abraham, the following parable will appear to have greater propriety and beauty.]

15. AND *when one of them who were guests with Jesus, heard these things, he said unto him, 'Happy is he who shall eat bread and share in a repast in the reign of the Messiah!'*

16. *Jesus then said to him, A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. 17. And, at supper-time, he sent out*

his servant, to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all things are now ready.'

18. And they all began with one mind and spirit, to excuse themselves. The first said unto him, 'I have just bought a field, and I am under the necessity of going to see it: I pray thee to make my excuse.'

19. And another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I am now going to examine them whether suitable for the plough: I pray thee to make my excuse.'

20. And another said, 'I have married a wife: and therefore, as I have company to entertain, I cannot come.'

21. So that servant returned, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house was angry, and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the broad streets and lanes of the city; and bring in hither the poor, and the disabled, and the lame, and the blind.'

22. And the servant came back, and said, 'Sir, it is done as thou hast commanded; and yet there is room.'

23. And the lord said to the servant, 'Go out into the high-ways, and seek for strangers whether journeying or resting in the shade of hedges, and urgently persuade them to come in, that my house may be filled: 24. For I say unto you, that none of those persons who have been invited, shall taste of my supper.'

v. 23: "The sheikh of an Arab village, on being informed of the approach of strangers, was wont to meet and conduct them to a lodging: or if urgent business prevented them from staying in the village, he sent them refreshments, of which they hastily partook *under the shade of the trees and hedges*." (Dr. A. CLARKE.)

v. 21: *Φεγαυμοὺς*: 'those camping as gypsies, now-a-days, under the hedges:' TRENCH. 'The mean and indigent, who have no shelter but the walls or fences which bound the high-ways:' GRESWELL. 'The enclosures:' BURTON. 'Fenced paths or foot-roads across vineyards, orchards, &c.; bye-paths:' BLOOMFIELD. 'Poor helpless travellers who are sheltering themselves under trees and hedges:' DODDRIDGE. 'Hedges where beggars usually have their stations:' MACKNIGHT. 'Narrow ways among the vineyards:' ROBINSON.

THE Great Supper is an emblem of the preparation made in the Gospel, for sinners. Whatever could be prepared by an Eastern monarch for his most favoured guests, are feeble types of the richer provision for the souls which hunger and thirst after righteousness. He that eateth of this bread, shall live for ever.

If an earthly prince require our presence, we promptly testify our sense of the honour. But far less is the distance between the poorest beggar and the mightiest earthly monarch, than between the mightiest earthly monarch and Jehovah, the King of Kings. Yet this Sovereign Lord condescends to invite *us*; the hungry, poor, and naked.

The hospitality should be estimated by its extent. The host bids *many*. Christ tasted death for *every man*. The King is anxious that his house may be *full*.

The excuses, made for declining the invitation, admonish us, that the most lawful employments and even domestic attachments, may cease to be innocent, if they intrude upon spiritual affairs. We incur the danger of supposing, that when we have, first and above all, secured our worldly connexions and transacted our temporal matters, then, and not until then, is the season for examining into the state of our souls. By this means, not only do men destroy their souls for great secular advantages or by gross outward sins; but they so misplace even lawful things, and act so carnally even in the ordinary affairs of life, that they perish by such matters, as might have been attended to with greater advantage, had they sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. To be *wholly* taken up by the lawful or even necessary business of life, will as effectually hinder a man from tasting of the supper which God has prepared, as to fall into more flagrant sin.

The two excuses relating to the purchase of the field and oxen, belonged to bargains already made: so that going to see the farm and to prove the oxen, that evening rather than the next morning, was merely the effect of rudeness on the one hand, and of a foolish impatient humour on the other; and never could have been urged, had they esteemed the inviter or his entertainment. Accordingly it is commonly founded in fact, that men neglect the blessings and demands of the Gospel, not

for the most important affairs in life with which they seldom interfere, but to indulge the caprice and folly of their own tempers, and to gratify the impulse of present passions, sometimes excited on very low occasions.

What was the result of neglecting the invitation? The host was angry. The forbearance of God had limits. The children of Abraham are rejected from his table; and the Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, supply their place.

In this mirror we may contemplate ourselves. Blindness to Gospel-mercies is a dangerous malady. If the natural vine be rooted out, shall the engrafted olive be spared, if barren?

The preceding inferences from the parable belong, in part, to the parable recorded by St. Matthew: but in St. Luke's record, there is an expression which is dangerous to be misunderstood: "*compel* them to come in."

This phrase, in reference to the circumstances of the parable, cannot imply a threat, coercion, or punishment: but, in truth, it is an expression of courtesy and of invitation to a banquet. There are many ways of *compelling*, in the figurative and moral sense, very different from compulsion *by force* of arms. In the sacred writings, men are said to be compelled by importunity (Gen. xxxiii. 11; 1 Sam. xxviii. 23; Luke, xxiv. 29); sometimes by what men deem necessary business, as in the present parable; sometimes, by a sense of duty (1 Pet. v. 2); sometimes, by the impulse of love and gratitude (2 Cor. v. 14). From these and numerous like expressions in Scripture, it is evident that when the preachers of the Gospel are enjoined to *compel* men to come in, the meaning is, 'Compel them by irresistible clearness of reason, by strength of argument, and affectionate admonition; convince, persuade, entreat them; set before them the certainty of a future judgment, the promises and the threatenings of the Lord: prevail with them by your own good example: urge, press, inculcate upon them the necessity of religion.'

A right sense of religion cannot be put into men's minds by force of arms. The heart is the seat of religion: and where that concurs not, the outward action is of no consideration in the sight of God. To what, then, can men be compelled by force, in matters of religion? to nothing but a mocking of God; to nothing but hypocrisy.

Force is most opposite to the spirit of Christianity. Our Saviour's whole life and character were, that he *went about, doing good*. He was meek and merciful. "*Will ye be my disciples,*" was his mode of inviting; "*will ye go away,*" was his mode of expostulation. He rebuked his intemperate disciples for not knowing *what manner of spirit they were of*. He foretells persecution as the character of apostasy from his true Church. "*The time cometh that whosoever KILLETH you, will think that he doeth God service; and these things will they do, because they have known neither me nor my Father.*" If then there be a Church who compels converts to come in, by racks and tortures, by dragoons and inquisitions, by fire and sword; if in that Church be found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that are slain upon the earth (Rev. xvii. 6; xviii. 24), there cannot be on that Church a more certain mark of anti-Christian corruption. In reference to such a Church, the Holy Spirit exclaims, "*Come out of her, my people; that ye be not partakers of her sins; and that ye receive not of her plagues.*" (DEAN STANHOPE. Dr. S. CLARKE.)

Our Lord with the design of reproving the pride of the Pharisees, of vindicating his kind reception of sinners for their amendment, and of encouraging the penitent, utters the parable of the Prodigal Son. LUKE, xv. 11-32.

11. *A certain man had two adult sons: 12, and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me now that portion of the patrimony, which, at some time or other, falls to my legal share.' And he divided between them his property.*

[Neither the Jewish nor Roman law allowed a father the voluntary distribution of his whole estate. Among the Jews, a double portion was allotted to the first-born; and the remainder was divided equally among the rest of the children: nor was it unusual for a father to settle during his life, the patrimony upon a son, reserving for himself (as in the parable) so much of the estate as was sufficient for the support of the rest of the family.]

13. *And not many days after, the younger son, turning all into money, went abroad into a distant country; and there living in-dissolute-debauchery, he dissipated his substance.*

14. *And when he had spent all, a vehement famine took place in that country, and he himself began to be in want : 15, and he went, and attached himself as a servant, to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his grounds to feed swine ; an employment deemed contemptible among all heathen nations, and especially among the Jews. 16. And he would have been glad to have filled his belly with the pods of the carob-tree, the food of the swine ; and so great was the famine, that no man gave unto him better food.*

[The fruit of the carob-tree is still used in the East for feeding swine ; and is eaten by the poorer people.]

17. *And when he came to himself with serious reflection, he said in his own mind, ' How many hired slaves of my father have a superfluity of bread ; but I, his son, am perishing with famine.*

18. *I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, ' Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee ; 19, and I am no more worthy to be thy son : treat and esteem me as one of thy hired slaves.' 20. And he arose, and went to his father.*

20. *But while he was yet at a considerable distance, his father recognised him ; and his bowels yearned over him, and he ran and fell on his neck, and affectionately-kissed him.*

21. *And the son said to him, ' Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee ; and am no more worthy to be thy son.'*

22. *But the tender father, not waiting to reply to his son, said to his servants, ' Bring out that principal robe, reserved for festivals, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet.*

[Fine robes and rings were considered in the East as marks of distinction : *Esther*, viii. 2 ; *Isa.* iii. 21 ; *James*, ii. 2. Slaves were accustomed to go barefoot.]

23. *And bring hither that fatted calf, and sacrifice it ; and let us eat, and make merry : 24, for this my son was dead to me, and is alive again : he was lost, and is found.' And they began to be merry.*

25. *Now his son, the elder son, was in the field, attending the concerns of the farm : and as, on his return, he approached the house, he heard music and dancing : 26, and calling to him one of the servants, he enquired what was the meaning of these things. 27. And he said to him, ' Thy brother hath arrived ; and thy*

father hath slain the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe-and-sound' [or in health.]

28. And the son was angry, and would not go in. His father, therefore, came out and entreated him. 29. But he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, I am serving thee these many years : nor have I, at any time, transgressed thy commandment : and yet thou hast never given me so much as a kid, that I might banquet with my friends : 30, but as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy substance with harlots, thou hast slain for him the fatted calf.'

31. And the father said to him, ' Son, thou art always with me, and receivest daily proofs of my love ; and all that I have, is thine as my heir : 32, but it was fit that we should feast and rejoice to-day : for this brother of thine was looked upon as dead, and is alive again : he was lost to us ; and has been found.'

By the father is meant God, the great Father and Lord of the world, who, out of his abundance, bestows on mankind their several portions.

By the two sons are meant, the two different sorts of men in the world. In the character of the eldest son, are represented those men, who, being blessed with virtuous inclinations, and careful education, have not wandered from their father's house ; but have served their heavenly Father, without any wilful transgression of his commandments. In the character of the younger son, who is the prodigal, are represented all those men who abuse the talents, benefits, helps, and powers bestowed upon them, to evil purposes ; who forsake the guidance of their heavenly Father, and betake themselves to a course of vice and sensuality ; in a word, all who live wickedly, whether Jews or Gentiles.

In the account of the prodigal's evil courses, we have a lively description of the methods and steps by which sinners proceed in sin, and the wretched condition they are thereby brought into.

I. 1. The younger son having got his portion, thinking his liberty too much abridged, in order to be free from the restraint of his father, goes into a foreign country. And thus it is with sinners : the first step of their miscarriage, is the forsaking their heavenly Father. They think it too severe a discipline to

live always under the apprehensions of an invisible Being ; and therefore put the thoughts of God out of their minds, saying with the profane people in Job, ‘ *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* ’ That is, they depart from God while they do not consider or regard him ; while they lay aside the care of his worship, neglect their prayers and holy exercises, and live as if they did not believe there is an intelligent omnipotent Being, who governs the world, and to whom they are accountable.

I. 2. The prodigal, having got into a distant country, and out of his father’s sight, lives viciously and profusely, and soon spends what his father had given him. Thus also the sinner, when once he throws off the fear of God (which is the best security of men’s innocence), presently runs into all sorts of extravagancy ; gives the reins to every appetite and passion ; and by this means misapplies those talents which God hath committed to him. He besots his understanding, weakens all his spiritual powers, hardens his conscience, and thereby loses all sense of good and evil : he squanders away his time, and renders himself incapable of the advantages which God gave him to improve in virtue.

The prodigal, having thus spent his portion by his profuse way of living, is at last, by reason of the extremity of want, forced to become a servant. This is the true condition of a sinner. They who give themselves to commit sin, are the servants of sin. He that is entangled in a habit of vice and wickedness, is no longer at his own disposal, but his lusts hurry him whithersoever they will. Reason is dethroned ; and the brutish part of man governs. He is not a servant to one lord only, but to many, and all inconsistent with one another ; which makes the servitude still more intolerable. Lust commands one thing ; ambition, another ; covetousness this way, intemperance another ; some the man must obey : and yet whithersoever he does, the rest are displeased for not being gratified.

I. 3. The prodigal, having thus of a freeman made himself a servant, is put to the meanest and most contemptible employment, even to feed swine. Just thus are all they treated who give themselves up to a vicious life. God designed men for noble employments, so long as they remained under their

Father's wing, in his fear and obedience. Their work was suitable to their dignity; to contemplate God and his works; to exercise their reason about the noblest subjects; to sing praises to the author of their being; to love and do good to all their fellow-creatures, as they had opportunity; and to govern their inferior appetites. But alas! what a mighty change is there, when a man departs from God. Without a figure, we may truly say, that the keeping of swine with the prodigal is a more honourable employment than that which sinners choose for themselves. What can be more vile than that immortal souls, made for the fruition of God himself, should spend days and years in scraping together heaps of money, which in a little time will prove useless to them; or in wallowing in uncleanness, which generally ends in beggary, shame, or rottenness? or in filling their bodies full of drink, till there be nothing but the shape of a man remaining? And yet these are the principal employments in which vicious men busy themselves. *Whatever is in the world, is either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life.* Sensual pleasures, wealth, popular applause and greatness, are the three great idols of the world; and whosoever forsakes his God, worships one or more of them.

I. 4. But to come to the last circumstance of the prodigal's condition: As coarse and disagreeable fare as the husks were, yet he would have been glad to have satisfied his hunger even with these, but thus much was denied him. "*He would fain fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat, but no man gave them unto him.*" Wretched, unhappy man! he, who before pampered himself with all sorts of delicacies, even to surfeiting, would now be glad of any sort of food, even of husks, if he could get them. But so cruel is the master he serves, that he will not suffer him to fill his belly, no not with these. Thus doth the devil treat all those who abandon God to serve him and their own lusts. The best wages they have is only a little sensual pleasure, or empty honour, which are but husks in comparison of the noble entertainments of religion and a good conscience. But even of these they cannot have their fill; for, alas! they are obnoxious to a thousand contingencies; they are, in a short time, either taken from us; or we, from them.

How can he be said to have his fill of wealth, who is either always craving and drudging for more, or anxiously fearful to lose what he hath ? And as for bodily pleasures, what do they signify, when the powers of nature grow feeble and languid ? Besides, what comfort can they afford a sinner under a multitude of afflicting circumstances, to which he is unavoidably exposed ? Can he say, I will refresh myself with wine, or music, when he lies languishing on a sick bed ? Or will his heaps of treasure charm the gout, stone, or colic, that they shall not torment him ? or, lastly, can all these things together yield any balm to heal a wounded conscience, which, in the midst of the most luxurious entertainments, makes the vicious man to look pale with the bitter reflections of his life past, and the dismal prospect of what is to come. If he looks inward, there is all hell, despair, and confusion ; there he finds a soul polluted with sin, oppressed with intolerable loads of guilt, and filled with the remembrance of his past folly. If he looks upwards, he sees an offended God, whose laws he hath affronted ; whose threatenings he hath despised ; whose grace he hath turned into wantonness ; and to whose Holy Spirit he hath done despite. Oh ! miserable state ! the dismal conclusion of a sinful life ! the natural consequence of forsaking God, and giving ourselves over to a course of vice and impiety. Nor is there any probability of preventing or averting those consequences, unless, with the prodigal, we do in time *come to ourselves*, and enter into a serious consideration of our ways, and then *arise and go to our Father*.

II. Which leads us to consider the prodigal's return. *I will arise and go to my father*. And here we have a lively representation of the beginning and progress of repentance, after a vicious life. 1. The prodigal being pinched with extremity of want, at last comes to weigh things seriously in his own mind. Whilst he was in the height of his prosperity, he minded nothing but the pursuit of his riot ; he seemed to live without any kind of reflection. But at last, his miserable circumstances make him to deliberate, and use his reason. He then considers the happiness he has lost, and the wretched condition to which his folly hath brought him. And this puts him upon serious resolutions to apply to his father.

II. 2. Were we thus wise, did we thus consider, I doubt

not but through the grace of God, we should in a very little time, feel a mighty change in our minds; and then imitate the prodigal in the *second* step he made to his repentance; namely, enter into firm resolutions to return to our heavenly Father, from whom we have so long withdrawn ourselves.

It is the want of thinking and reflecting that is the great occasion of all the immoralities of our lives. It would not be possible for any man to live in the practice of common oaths and imprecations, if he did seriously consider that it is the dreadful name of God he is going to affront, who can damn him in good earnest for the abuse of his tongue. Did we ponder deeply and often upon the uncertainty of our lives, the madness, the shame, and uneasiness of sin; the joy, peace, and continual feast of innocency and a good conscience; the serious desire of God that we should all be happy; the severe account we must one day give of all our actions; the unspeakably glorious and immortal life that we may attain by holiness, and the everlasting punishment that does certainly await all profane, ungodly, impenitent sinners; let a man seriously and constantly consider these things, and it would not be possible for him to live in any wicked course. We cannot always live without thinking. A time will come, when we shall consider whether we will or no. Happy they, who with the prodigal, come to themselves in time, before the mercies of their Father be closed against them. (ARCHBISHOP SHARPE.)

In the parable of the unjust Steward, our Lord enjoins that all our advantages should be directed to the glory of God, and to the attainment of future bliss. LUKE, xvi. 1-9.

1. AND *Jesus said, moreover, to his general disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and this man was accused to him as dissipating his possessions.* 2. And, in surprise, he called him and said to him, *What is this that I hear of thee? Give the account of thy stewardship: for unless thy account be faithful, thou canst not be steward any longer.*

3. Then the steward said within himself, *What shall I do? because my master is taking away from me my stewardship: I have not strength to dig as a day-labourer: and to beg I am*

ashamed. 4. *I have resolved what I will do : that when I am put out from the stewardship, they [the tenants] may receive me into their houses.*

5. *And having called to him every one of his master's tenants, he said to the first, 'To what extent is thy contract with my lord?'*

6. *And he said, 'I have promised to pay a hundred baths of oil. And the steward said to him, 'Take back thy bond [or, promissory note] and sit down directly; make a fresh copy for my signature, and write fifty.'*

7. *Then the steward said to another, 'And how large is thy contract?' And he said, 'I have promised to supply a hundred cors of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take back thy bond; and in a fresh copy, write four-score.'*

8. *And the master of the steward, though he was defrauded, commended the dexterous ingenuity of the unjust steward, because he had acted prudently [or, providently] : for (as our Saviour subjoined by way of applying the parable,) the children of this world, in their intercourse with their contemporaries, are more prudent than the children of light.*

9. *And I say unto you, Make to yourselves, by means of deceitful riches [or, the mammon of deceit] such friends, that when ye quit life, ye may be received, not as the fraudulent steward, into the temporary abodes of the tenants, but into the eternal tabernacles.*

v. 1. The master or lord is represented as receiving his rents, not in money, but in kind or the produce of the land. The tenant transcribed the bond or contract; which was afterwards signed by the steward.

v. 6. A *bath* was nine gallons, three quarts.

v. 7. A *cor* was fourteen bushels and a pottle.

v. 8. Εἰς τὴν γενεάν τῆς αὐτοῦ. 'More dexterous to make provision for the remainder of their life :' HAMMOND. 'More prudent in conducting their affairs, or in their manner of life :' CAMPBELL, HOLDEN, BARNES, DODDRIDGE, VALPY, BISHOP PEARCE. 'Unto or for their generation :' BLOOMFIELD. 'In providing for the comfort and support of this life :' DR. A. CLARKE, WHITBY. 'More prudent in respect of their present interests :' SCOTT. 'Among the men of their time, are a wiser

generation of men.' ARCHBISHOP NEWCOME. 'The men of this world make their intercourse with one another [*as fraudulent accomplices*] more profitable than do the children of light *their* intercourse with one another.' TRENCH. 'Are wiser in the generation of men wherein they live.' ROSE. 'Hujus seculi homines sunt in suo genere prudentiores Christianis.' SCHLEUSNER.

v. 9. *Mammon* is a Syriac word for *riches*.

IN the interpretation of parables, we are to content ourselves with drawing such consequences as their main intent naturally suggests, without insisting too nicely upon circumstances which are only incidental. Now the purport of this parable is manifestly to provoke our imitation of the steward's forecast; who dexterously laid a scheme for his subsistence, by the management of a trust, which, although a present support, was not likely long to continue. And his great providence and arrangements, expressive of that thought and care which stick at nothing to secure the uncertain advantages of this world, are insinuated as a just reproach to the inconsideration and remissness, of which even they are guilty, who make it their principle and profession, to secure the everlasting advantages of another world.

The particulars suggested in this parable, for awakening our diligence in this great concern of our souls, are principally three.

I. The first argument is taken from the quality of the person, whose behaviour makes the subject of this parable,—a steward to a certain rich man. That God should be represented under the character of a rich man, must needs be very natural and proper, because the whole world is his, and all that is therein. (Ps. i. 12.) And when we are styled *stewards* to that rich man, there are two things plainly intended by it.

1. The quality of a steward implies, that the goods we have, are not strictly our own. Upon which account, the accusation in the *first verse* runs, for *wasting that which was his master's*. We are the tillers of God's ground, and are allowed to rejoice in the fruits of our labour: but the soil itself belongs to none of us.

And when we have taken the utmost care imaginable, that our "*families may continue, and our dwelling-places endure from one generation to another,*" (Ps. xlix.) ; yet will there be a perpetual succession of fresh possessors into those *houses and lands*, which we have vainly *called after our own names*. So that the longest inheritance is no more than the longest use ; and after all our boast of settlements, nothing is or can be settled, but the original right in the great universal Lord.

2. Even the fruits or product, in which we have somewhat more of interest, are not so much ours, as that we may dispose of them at pleasure : they are committed to us in the nature of a trust. "*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Cor. iv. 2). The office plainly bespeaks a confidence for which they are accountable ; and the parable declares, that all those shall be punished for their unfaithfulness, who have squandered away their Lord's goods unprofitably. It must therefore import us very highly, to understand what those goods of our Master are, whereof he hath given us the trust, and expects to receive an account. Those specified in the parable, are plainly that *mammon of deceit* ; which is so called, partly, because it is frequently gotten by injustice and deceit ; and partly, because it deceives as many as depend and set their hearts upon it. Hence, in the following verses, we find it opposed to the *true riches* ; and termed *another's*, to distinguish it from the wealth which is truly *our own*.

A plentiful fortune, then, is the trust intimated here ; but we are not by any means to imagine, that rich men only stand in the capacity of stewards. Every advantage of nature or of grace, our life, our health, our strength, our knowledge natural and acquired, our time, our leisure, our every ability, our every opportunity, our every inclination to do well ; every dispensation of Providence, whether it be a change to honour or dishonour, to abundance or to poverty, to ease or to suffering ; our very afflictions and temptations ; all are our Master's goods ; all are capable to be made profitable of ; all will at last be brought to our account. And therefore, every man ought to esteem himself a steward : for though all have not the same trust, yet all have some trust : a trust, in which the greater circumspection is necessary, because it cannot continue always ; and because so much

depends upon the wise management of it, for the time it does continue.

II. A *second* argument for awakening our diligence in this great concern of our souls, is contained in the *second* and *third* verses; which import not only that this trust of ours must terminate at the pleasure of our Master; not only that at some time it certainly will terminate; but that the loss of it is a punishment. "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

The surprising events, and mighty changes, in families and fortunes; the innumerable chances of life, or the almost as numberless variety of deaths, must be granted to be so many different methods of God's taking away our stewardship from us, or us from it; and so many instances of his sovereignty. But the Scriptures, when they mention God's proceedings of this nature, observe, that he acts in the quality, not of a lord and proprietor only, but in that of a judge too: since, generally speaking, the loss of our stewardship is a punishment upon us. Thus riches are given to make men thankful instruments of good to others, from the imitation of the divine bounty to themselves. But when such opportunities are neglected, God often transfers them into a more worthy hand. Thus Job observes, "This is the portion of a wicked man with God: though he heap up silver as the dust, the innocent shall divide it." Thus does God frequently proceed, with regard to the goods of nature and of grace, committed to our trust. It was for the abuse of natural reason that God gave the heathens "*up to vile affections and a reprobate mind.*" (Rom. i. 26, 28.) It is of grace that our Lord denounces, "*From him that hath not, that makes not a right use of what he hath, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.*" (Luke, viii. 18.) Various are the modes of these privations, in the form of punishment: but there is one common to all stewards; even death; which will displace us all. And death, like the rest, is a punishment for sin; death too leads us, when thus put out, to a reckoning, from which none can be exempted; a reckoning, which he, who is himself our Master and our Judge, hath peremptorily declared will turn upon the manner in which his servants have managed their respective talents, delivered out to be trafficked with for their Lord's use. And they who have

not discharged their consciences upon this article, will be looked upon as betrayers of their trust, and doomed to everlasting punishment for their ingratitude and injustice.

III. Hence appears the necessity of imitating the prudence of the steward, in securing to himself a future subsistence; as his life was not to end with his removal from his place. Our case, in this respect, is the same. Death leaves us nothing farther to manage; but death itself does not make an utter end of us. There is a future and eternal state, to which we are reserved. This, therefore, is our greatest prudence always to make all we have and all we do, turn to account for our comfortable being hereafter.

How this is to be done, the Scriptures abundantly inform us. From hence we learn, that good parts, and learning, and study, are to be employed in promoting religion and truth; in examples and persuasions, proportionable to the measures of these advantages. Concerning the assistance of grace, often are we called upon to *work together with God*, to be exceeding careful, that *we receive it not in vain*; to *minister the gift one to another as good stewards*; to employ it to the glory of God, to the advancement of his truth, to the edification of his church, to the spiritual benefit of our brethren, and the general good of mankind. The same obligation extends to all goods whatever, committed to our care. Has health been undermined by vicious indulgence? Has reason been employed in keeping the passions in due subjection? How many years have been wasted? Have we used our opportunities of reading the word of God, and of attending upon public worship? All these are trusts: but because the parable is express in the case of riches, the rich are thereby especially admonished to exercise charity and compassion: thus they engage the prayers of the poor: thus they conciliate the favour of Christ; who considering what is done to his indigent brethren as done unto himself, will prove to be such a friend as can receive us into everlasting tabernacles. (STANHOPE.)

Recognition in a future state. LUKE, xvi. 19-31.

19. *Now there was a certain rich man, who wore purple robes and fine linen, and feasted every day in a splendid sumptuous*

manner. 20. *And there was a certain destitute man, Lazarus by name, who was daily laid at his gate-way, covered with ulcers, 21, and desiring to be satisfied with the fragments which fell from the rich man's table : moreover, the dogs came, and licked his ulcers.*

22. *And it came to pass that the destitute man died ; and was carried away by angels into the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died, and was buried.*

23. *And in Hades, being in torments, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham at a distance, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

24. *And he called out and said, ' Father Abraham, have mercy upon me ; and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue : for I am pained in this flame.'*

25. *But Abraham said, ' Son, remember that thou, in thy life-time, receivedst the things which thou didst account good ; and likewise Lazarus, in his life-time, evil things : but now he is consoled, and thou art pained. 26. And in addition to all these things, between us and you, a great chasm is fixed : so that they who would pass over hence to you, cannot ; neither can they who are there, cross over thence unto us.'*

27. *Then he said, ' I pray thee, therefore, Father Abraham, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house : 28, for I have five brethren : that he may earnestly-testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'*

29. *Abraham saith unto him, ' They have the writings of the Jewish Church, even Moses and the prophets : let them hearken unto them.' 30. And he said, ' Not so, father Abraham ; they will not hearken to the Jewish Scriptures : but if one go to them from the dead, they will reform.'*

31. *But Abraham said unto him, ' If they hearken not to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should arise from the dead to instruct them.'*

[In this parable many expressions occur in reference to the notions of the Jews.

v. 23. The Rabbies taught that Hades, or the receptacle of departed souls, was divided into two parts ; the abodes of the blessed lying contiguous to the regions of the condemned ; and

separated only by a fixed impassable gulf or river; and that the souls, in each compartment, could know and converse with each other.—MACKNIGHT.

The souls of good men were carried away, at death, by good spirits; and the souls of wicked men, by evil spirits; who come and say, "There is no peace to the wicked."—WHITBY.

As the Jews had no doubt of Abraham's happiness, the Rabbies often used the phrase, '*Abraham's bosom*' to denote heaven, or paradise, or the happiness of the future state. As it was usual with the Jews to represent 'the joys of heaven' by 'a feast,' so the partaking of them was denoted by "sitting down at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."—GILL. The attitude at meals was to lie along on couches, usually three persons on each couch. The middle place was the place of honour. When a guest had done eating, he turned upon his left side.—SMITH. He that lay below another, might be said to "*lie or lean on his bosom*." Hence to lie in Abraham's bosom signified the near and intimate enjoyment of happiness, with Abraham in another world.—GILL.

The phrase to "lie in a person's bosom" often implies the being an object of his affection, the intimate partner of his counsels;—the metaphor being taken from a mother's carrying her child in her bosom: or from the attitude at feasts, mentioned above.

To lift up the eyes is a phrase used when they are attracted by any remarkable or unexpected object. John, vi. 5; Gen. xxii. 13; Luke, vi. 20.]

WHAT was the crime of this rich man? Did it consist in the hardness of his heart towards Lazarus? If he had been so insensible, why did he allow Lazarus to be laid, daily, at his gate? He is not censured as an adulterer, extortioner, a treacherous friend. His guilt seems to have consisted in his indolence and selfishness. The goods which he sought in this life, were riches, feasting, sensual pleasure, and the pride of life: in these he had been gratified: but, after death, his laughter was converted into gnashing of teeth.

But whatever had been the rich man's guilt, let us examine into the nature of his punishment.

Here it is observable, that he readily and distinctly recognised Lazarus in his happy state. The patriarch addresses his petitioner with the word '*Remember.*' The unhappy sufferer speaks of Lazarus as likely to know his surviving brethren, and to be known by them, if he were despatched upon a warning mission. Thus the general aggravation of his punishment must have been that lively consciousness, which attended him to the regions of the condemned. If, indeed, this feeling of consciousness were to be suspended, how, in that interval, could the human soul exist? Where would be its identity? Where would be the grandeur and simplicity of the great Creator, in being compelled to form anew what he had once formed already? Where would be the justice and mercy of God in arraiguing, before his tribunal, creatures who retained no recollection of their past actions? But the manifestations of our Lord to his disciples, subsequent to his resurrection; the assurances that we shall arise from the grave, in the bodies which the soul now animates; the descriptions of glorified spirits, who, after their sufferings and separations, are all united in the fellowship of bliss; these arguments, derived from the pages of revelation, are more than sufficient to establish the important truth, that we shall recognise each other in a future state, with a full unbroken consciousness of all past occurrences on earth. From these inherent qualities of the soul, were derived the aggravations of the rich man's sufferings.

1. The first particular in which this consciousness may be exemplified, was the perpetual view of the happiness which he had lost. *And he lift up his eyes, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* To see the heavens opening; to view the spirits of just men, happy in the presence of their God; and then to revert from those mansions of light and joy, to the dungeons of darkness and sorrow; to feel our hearts rising towards the God that made us, and then, by some invisible power, to be thrust back again;—God protect us from so forlorn a state. How can the souls of the condemned forbear exclaiming, "Behold the kingdom which was prepared for us also: but we have renounced it for a vapour: we have bartered it for the pleasure of a moment." If, in those abodes of horror, there were no other suffering than the melancholy contrast of happiness for-

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feited and misery to be endured ; what tears could sufficiently deplore the sad condition !

2. This power of consciousness may again be exemplified in the recollection of the past. *Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivest thy good things.* What a crowd of agonizing thoughts must this language of Abraham have awakened ! His riches squandered in luxurious pleasures : the advantage of being one of God's peculiar people, neglected : the promises to Abraham's posterity, rendered null and void ;—the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, the law and the prophets, all of no avail for his salvation.

On the other hand, let the true disciples of Christ labour to convert this recollection of the past into an exalted pleasure. The saints will retrace their earthly course, as a traveller reviews the map of a past journey. Here, by the grace of God, I vanquished a temptation : here I listened to his gracious instructions : here I was enabled to console the mourner : here I received strength to endure my cross : here can I discern the progressive steps of that discipline, by which I am, at length, associated in my Redeemer's glory.

3. Lastly : this quality of consciousness may be exemplified in anticipating the upbraidings of his surviving brethren, who had been endangered by his bad example. *I pray thee, father Abraham, that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father's house : for I have five brethren : that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torment.*

Alas ! how many may now be under condemnation, with whom we once associated ;—the aggravation of whose torments is the view of those enormities, which we are now committing from their former influence over our minds ! Perhaps, the perjured wretch, whose boast it was to have degraded some credulous woman, is now deploring his crime with groans : and every instance of her subsequent shame points the tormenting flame with ten-fold vengeance upon his soul. Perhaps, some infidel who corrupted our faith by his impious doubts, would gladly leave his prison-house to say, "Hasten to participate in that atoning blood which was shed so unavailingly for me." Perhaps, some licentious author, whose loose writings have inflamed our sensual passions, is begging of Abraham, that he may come

and snatch the accursed volume from our hands. Perhaps, some dramattick writer (such as the age of the Second Charles produced,) would willingly present himself amid the crowded theatre: fain would he exclaim with awful voice, "Depart ye from this place: death is before you: relieve my present agonies by heeding not my former lessons. I testify unto you lest ye also come to this place of torment."

This power of recognition in the future state of existence, a source of the most poignant anguish to the sensual rich man, may be converted into an instrument of everlasting transport. Those to whom Christ, by his merits, shall accord a place in the many mansions, will meet as friends those whom love or kindred had linked together in the lower world. To see, to recognise, to associate with them, will increase our and their happiness. The wounds of the heart will then be closed: and the re-union of Christian friends, separated for a while, will be indissoluble. With these consoling hopes while we bend over the graves of departed Christian friends, let us pray for grace that we may follow their good example, and be associated with them, as on earth, so in heaven. (MASSILLON. HEWLETT.)

Evidences of the Gospel entitled to our assent: LUKE, xvi. 31.
If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

WHATEVER might be the motive of the Rich Man's desire, that an admonition should be sent to his surviving brethren; it is important to observe, upon what principles the request was denied. *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

Let none vainly excuse themselves from believing the evidence of the Revelation which God has given, on the pretence that if they saw signs and wonders, they would believe. If all men were to be indulged in their demand of miracles, what might not presumption ask? what confusion might not ensue, while the sun went backwards or forwards, in obedience to the will of the incredulous! We should be no more surprised at a daily resurrection of a deceased friend, than we now are at his recovery from sickness.

It may be safely asserted that such men as will not be persuaded to be sincerely religious, by that evidence and those arguments which God has afforded us, would not be persuaded by any other evidence or motive of religion, which their own unreasonable fancy could suggest to them to desire. And the reason hereof is plainly this: the true cause why any such wicked man neglects and disbelieves the great truths of religion, is not that these things want sufficient evidence to convince his judgment, (for then he would not believe and act upon other grounds that have less proof, as every man plainly does in his worldly business;) but it is because his passions and affections are interested, and that his heart is set upon the sinful enjoyments of this present world; it is for this reason that he is willing to shake off the thoughts of such truths, as are contrary to these false interests and unreasonable affections. Did men follow the unprejudiced reason of their own minds, a small possibility of obtaining eternal happiness, or the least apparent hazard of falling into endless or lasting misery, would immediately determine them to make it the great business of their lives, to obtain the one and to avoid the other. Wherefore, when we see men act directly contrary to this natural principle, and almost wholly neglect these most important of all things, not only when there is a great appearance of their possibility, but when there is, moreover, all reasonable positive evidence of their being certainly true; is it not manifest that such persons are guided, not by reason and the force of evidence, but by blind passion and unreasonable affection? And where this affection and love for the sinful pleasures of the world are so strong, as to cause men to despise the authority both of reason and Scripture in conjunction; to elude the clearest and most undeniable evidence of matter of fact; to become deaf to all the promises and threatenings, the persuasions and terrors of the Gospel; to disregard all the kind warnings that God gives them by his Spirit and by his ministers, by his mercies and his judgments, and by all the dispensations of his Providence; there is little doubt but the same persons would resist any other means, that should be made use of for their conversion and reformation. We are many of us willing perhaps to imagine, that if we had lived in our Saviour's time; if we had heard his preaching and seen his miracles; if we had had the advantage of beholding

those mighty works which he performed for the proof of his divine commission, as the Jews then had ; we should not, like them, have rejected the counsel of God against ourselves ; but with all cheerfulness have believed his doctrine and embraced his religion ; we may be apt to fancy, we should have immediately become disciples of Christ ; and that the truths which he taught, would have had a powerful influence upon the whole course of our lives. But all this is a very great fallacy ; and if the arguments of religion now have no influence upon us, we should then likewise as certainly have found our evasions to elude them. The Jews are a lasting instance, how far prejudice and affection are able to prevail over the strongest convictions. When our Saviour began to preach that he was sent from God to instruct them in their duty, they required a sign of him and they would believe him : but when he had worked so many miracles, that even the world itself could not contain the books if they should all be written, they still persisted in their infidelity. When they saw him hanging upon the cross, and thought themselves secure of him, they said, " Let him now come down from the cross, and we *will* believe him ; " but when he arose out of the grave wherein he had lain three days, which was a much greater and more convincing miracle ; they grew more hardened and obstinate in their unbelief. And reasonably may we believe, if we live wickedly now ; that the same would have been our case, if we had lived in those days.

Should God now send a messenger from the dead to assure men of the certainty of a future state, and the danger of their present wickedness : as soon as their present terrible apprehensions were ceased, it is extremely probable they would find some way or other to ascribe it all to the delusion of fancy and imagination ; and that their old vicious habits and beloved sins would again by degrees prevail over them.

In order to the making men truly religious, it is not necessary that God should on his part work more miracles to give them greater convictions ; but only that they, on their own part, should become reasonable persons ; lay aside their unjust prejudices, and forsake their unreasonable lusts, which hinder them from considering the true force of the arguments of religion. They have no concern for the interests of truth and virtue. The love of this present world has blinded their eyes ; and it is

for that reason only, that they receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them. (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

The sum of all therefore is ; let us take care to free ourselves from those unreasonable prejudices, wherewith carelessness, and want of consideration, and unrighteous practice, are used to blind us : and then we shall soon be convinced of the truth and of the necessity of religion. Let us but be sincerely willing to obey the will of God, and then we shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. In a word, let us but suffer ourselves to be governed by our passions less, and by our reason more. Let us consider the arguments of reason and Scripture without prejudice or partiality, and resolve to direct our lives by those rules which shall appear most truly wise and reasonable ; and then we shall certainly become as religious by hearing Moses and the prophets, by hearing Christ and his apostles, as if we had been preached to by one immediately from the dead. (DR. S. CLARKE.)

Our Saviour enjoins upon his disciples frequent prayer as a consolation under persecution. LUKE, xviii. 1-8.

1. AND he spake a parable unto them, in reference to the necessity of praying frequently, and not being faint and languid in the performance, saying ; 2. In a certain city, was a certain judge who neither feared God nor regarded man. 3. And in that city was a widow ; and she came unto him saying, ' Do me justice on mine adversary.' 4. And for a while he would not : but after these things, he said within himself, ' Though I neither fear God nor regard man, 5, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will do her justice, lest by her coming, she at length weary [stun] me.'

6. And the Lord said, Hear what the iniquitous judge saith. 7. And if the importunity of a poor widow thus prevailed on an unrighteous person, shall not a righteous God do justice for his own approved servants who, under oppression, cry unto him night and day, though he linger and seem to delay with regard to them ? 8. I tell you that he will do justice for them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man shall have come for this purpose, will he find in the land of Judea this belief that he would come in due time to vindicate their cause ?

OUR Saviour's injunction *to pray always* cannot be taken in a literal acceptation, without impeding all the active obligations of society : but the precept is susceptible of a practical application in the following senses :—

1. To *pray always* may import the cherishing a ready and habitual disposition to pray. Thus it is said of the righteous man that he is *ever* merciful : not that he is dispensing alms at every moment of his life ; but that he is constantly disposed to supply his neighbour with needful relief. As a true friend is *ever* ready to receive his friend with courtesy, so should we be *always* disposed cheerfully to converse with God, when he freely comes to us, or when we have need to apply ourselves to him.

2. To *pray always* may denote a vigilant attendance upon devotion ; such attendance as men usually bestow on their affairs ; which, though a pause intervene, are never wholly laid aside. We say that such a one is building a house, or writing a book, even though he be sleeping or following some other business ; because his main purpose continues uninterrupted.

3. To *pray always* imports that we embrace all fit occasions of devotion : as when we have received any singular blessing from God ; when success has attended a virtuous enterprise ; when ourselves, or children, or friends, have been rescued from danger ; when we undertake any business of special moment ; when we fall into doubts and darkness.

4. To *pray always* imports that, in all our occupations, we lift up our hearts to God. We can never be so fully employed, but that we may reflect on our sins, and breathe a penitential sigh ; feel the need of God's help, and despatch a brief petition for it ; remember his mercies, and send forth the fervent ejaculations of gratitude.

5. To *pray always* may imply that we appoint certain times, conveniently distant, for devotion. The lamb which, under the Mosaic Law, was sacrificed every morning and evening, was termed *the continual* sacrifice. The morning, on which we receive (as it were) a new life ; the evening, after being protected during the day ; these devotions may be termed *incessant*. It was the resolve of David, "Evening and morning and noon-day, will I pray." No hazard could prevent Daniel from praying and giving thanks to God three times a-day.

6. This precept is more especially exemplified in observing

the times of devotion ordained by public authority or settled by general custom. Thus the apostles were *continually* in the Temple; that is, they resorted thither at the stated times of meeting. In the same sense, Anna *departed not* from the Temple.

Lastly. To *pray always* may signify, that we should never cease from praying, till our requests have been granted. We, like Jacob, may wrestle with God, and say with him, 'I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.' In this sense, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. The disabled man, at Bethesda, waited thirty-eight years. This is the perseverance to which our Saviour alludes, in the present parable. Hateful is the character of the *unjust judge*, who neither feared God, nor revered man; but centered all his regards in himself. Yet even he was prevailed upon by importunity: and our Lord mentions it to encourage the fervour of our addresses to the throne of grace. Not that the blessed God, like this *unjust judge*, is to be wearied out with a peal of words; and thereby weakly induced to do what would otherwise have been contrary to his designs. Far from us be so absurd and impious a thought. Our condescending Lord only intended to intimate, that if the repeated importunate cries of the afflicted may, at length, prevail even on an inhuman heart, they will be much more regarded by a righteous and merciful God, who is always ready to bestow his favours, when he sees we are prepared to receive them. (BARROW. DODDRIDGE.)

Self-righteousness condemned. Luke, xviii. 9-14.

AND *Jesus spake this parable in reference to certain persons who were self-confident of their own righteousness, and set all others at nought.*

10. *Two men went up into the Temple, to pray: the one, a Pharisee; the other, a publican.* 11. *The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself: 'O! God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, rapacious, fallacious, adulterous; or even as this contemptible publican.* 12. *I fast twice in the week: I give tithes of all that I acquire.'*

13. *But the publican, standing at some distance from the Sanctuary as not daring to approach it, was reluctant even to*

lift up his eyes to heaven : but smote upon his breast, saying, O God, be propitiated to me the notorious sinner.'

14. *I tell you, this man went down to his house, approved by God in preference to the other : for every one who exalteth himself in his own estimation, shall be abased ; but he that abaseth himself in his own opinion, shall be exalted.*

v. 10 : *went up* : the Temple being on higher ground than the city.

v. 11 : *to stand* was an attitude of devotion.

v. 12 : the public and private fasts of the Jews were upon the second and fifth days of the week.

THE chief purpose of this parable, as appears from the opening words, is to discountenance spiritual pride, and to reprove those who haughtily despise others as sinners in comparison with themselves. This temper is clearly manifested in the form of the Pharisee's prayer. While the publican does not presume to approach near to the Sanctuary, but smites upon his breast in outward contrition,—and, in his mental prayer, throws himself upon the gratuitous mercy of God ; on the other hand, the Pharisee is the herald of his fancied merits, and regards with peculiar contempt *this* publican.

The spiritual pride with which the Pharisee was swollen, is deservedly hateful to God. It was pride that first brought rebellion and strife into heaven, and expelled the apostate angels, who affected to be equal or superior to their God and Creator. It is pride that inspires contempt of the same divine Majesty, in every presumptuous offender who quenches his Spirit, and tramples his laws under foot. Every proud man robs God of the honour due to his grace, erects new altars to strange deities ; and by the wildest idolatry, burns incense to himself.

But most especially is this vice destructive to a man's own soul : for it taints all our principles ; it covers our lurking faults, and prevents all repentance, and forbids the advice of friends. To one, so full of himself as to see no need of amendment, all reasonings of his own mind must needs be ineffectual. For everything there is seen through false glasses. The most slender appearances of virtue are brought nearer and magnified ;

the most deformed blemishes are thrown off at a vast distance, and lessened to the eye. Truth is never received till some awakening dispensation does, perhaps too late, discover the man to himself.

1. In considering the nature of that righteousness in which the Pharisee trusted, we observe that the foundation of those excellences he supposed in himself, lies chiefly in comparisons: 'I am not as other men are: I am not as this publican.' This is a most deceitful way of arguing, by which men are betrayed into speaking such comforts to their own consciences as no way belong to them. Each man's actions are the proper issue he shall be judged upon; those of our brethren cannot be considered in the account. And for a man to be esteemed righteous here, or to depend upon being happy hereafter, because some others are more wicked now, or shall be more miserable then, is not less absurd than it were for a person actually in sickness and pain, to fancy he hath perfect ease, because his neighbour's torments are more acute than his own.

(2.) The offences this Pharisee disavows, are *adulteries, extortion, injustice*; such, in a word, as very profligate people are supposed to abandon themselves to: and the standing clear of these is, no doubt, a blessing, of which every man ought to have a very thankful sense. For we are all by nature frail, and capable even of horrible enormities. But yet the virtue, requisite for commending us to God, must be a great deal more than this.

We do this Pharisee no wrong in saying that what he thanks God for, is in effect but that he was clear, not of all, but of the grossest and most infamous vices; had lived more cautiously than many others; and had been hitherto successful in deceiving the world with a pretence and pomp of godliness, without the true power of it. The frequent fastings and exact tithings in which he expressed so great satisfaction, are acts of piety which have much less of difficulty in them, than the attaining to any tolerable advancement in solid and substantial virtue. If our passions be not subdued, fasting is formality. If our Christian endeavours be not answerable to our devotions, prayer is but lip-service. But justice, charity, and humility, commend us, through Christ, to the favour and acceptance of God, and prepare us for a future state. The

devotional acts of the Pharisee expose us to the danger of placing religion where it is not. They dispose us to imaginary confidences, and carry away the mind after ceremony and show. They betray indiscreet people into that fatal error, that some peculiar voluntary severities will atone for many and grievous violations of moral duty. Thus our blessed Saviour (Matt. xxiii. 23) reproves *the tithing of mint, and anise, and cumin*, as taken in, to supply the place of *righteousness, and mercy, and faith*, by much *the weightier matters of the law*. Thus *fasting and hanging down the head like a bulrush*, are exposed by Isaiah (Isa. lviii. 4, 5), because many, who did so, *fasted for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness*.

If, then, the pretended innocence of this Pharisee before us was so imperfect, and if his boasted righteousness was liable to so just exceptions, our wonder may very well cease, that even *that* publican, the object of his scorn, shall return home more approved, rather than he: for, though we are at liberty to suppose this man's former life was blameable, yet the stains of his guilt appear to have been washed away by repentance; a repentance, which proved its own sincerity, by the profoundest remorse, and the exemplary modesty of his behaviour. These show him to us a pattern of true humility, a virtue more valuable than all the fasting in the world: a virtue, that defrauds none, but renders to all their due: to God, by magnifying his mercy and grace, and unfeignedly lamenting our own vileness; to men, by rejoicing in their just praises. It slanders not, despises not, but contains itself within its own sphere; triumphs not in the faults of others, but shows every man his own. It opens our ear to discipline, makes us susceptible of advice, and patient of reproof. It teaches us to disavow all merit, and to take sanctuary in mercy. The mistaken Pharisee imagined that the encomium on himself was a prayer, and trusted in this defective morality, and these ceremonies of human device, while an utter stranger to real vital religion. Happier, a thousand times happier, the poor publican, when abasing himself in the dust; when *smiting on his breast*; when owning himself a sinner, and imploring the Divine mercy as his only hope! Lord, we equally need it: may we with equal humility seek it! May we habitually maintain those views of ourselves, which may promote that humility, so necessary in order to the acceptance of our addresses, and therefore to the happiness of our souls. And indeed, if in our

approaches to God, we can place our confidence in any righteousness of our own, whatever we may imagine of our own knowledge or holiness, we have need to be taught again the first principles of both, and are strangers to the essentials of religion. (STANHOPE. DODDRIDGE.)

In the parable of the Labourers, our Saviour alludes to the unwillingness of the Jews to admit the Gentiles into a participation of their spiritual privileges: MATTHEW, xx. 1-16. *The kingdom of heaven may be fitly represented by a master of a family, who went out early in the morning, to hire labourers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers at a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

3. *And he went out about the third hour [nine o'clock], and saw other labourers standing unemployed in the market-place; the usual resort of those who wished to be hired: and said unto them, 'Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is equitable, I will give you.' And they went their way, without any other agreement.*

5. *Again he went out about the sixth hour [twelve], and ninth hour [three]; and did likewise.*

6. *And about the eleventh hour [five in the afternoon] when there was but one hour remaining, he went out and found others standing unemployed, and said unto them, 'Why stand ye here all the day, unemployed?' They say unto him, 'Because no man hath hired us.' He saith unto them, 'Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is equitable, that shall ye receive.'*

8. *Now when evening was come [six o'clock] the master of the vineyard saith unto his steward, 'Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning from those who were last hired, even to the first.' (Deut. xxiv. 15.)*

9. *And when they came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a denarius. And when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; but they also received, every man, a denarius. 11. And when they had received it, they murmured against the master, saying, 'Truly these last have laboured but one hour: and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden and the heat of the whole day.'*

13. *But he answered, and said to one of them, 'Friend, I do thee no injury: didst thou not agree with me for a denarius?*

Take what is thine; and go thy way; I will give to this last, even as to thee: is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own property? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? Art thou envious, because I am liberal?

16. *So the last in privileges shall be first in enjoyment of them: and the first shall be last: for many are invited by the messages of salvation; but few are chosen: few will obediently avail themselves of the invitation, so as to be approved and accepted by God.*

v. 1: A *denarius* ($7\frac{1}{2}d.$) was the usual price for a day's work. v. 3: The hours of a Jewish day were divided into four watches, each consisting of three hours. The day commenced at six in the morning, and closed at six in the evening.

THE parable of the labourers in the vineyard appears to have had, like other parables delivered by our Lord, a twofold purpose. It seems to have been designed, partly, to indicate in a prophetic manner the malignant dissatisfaction, with which the Jews would contemplate, after the ascension of Christ, the admission of the Gentiles to a participation of the blessings of the gospel, on a footing of equality with the descendants from Abraham; and partly, to warn men in all future ages, against the indulgence of a kindred spirit of discontent on any other occasion. It is to the latter purpose that the parable is now to be applied.

When the owner of the vineyard directed that a sum, the same with that which he had contracted to give to the persons who had been hired early in the morning, should also be paid to the others, who had been hired at later periods of the forenoon, or in the afternoon, or even but an hour before sunset; he was aware perhaps that it was not from unwillingness to labour, that several sets of his workmen had lost parts of the day; but merely *because no man had hired them*. Perhaps, he observed that, when they were sent into his vineyard, they worked with greater diligence than their companions who had been hired sooner. At any rate, the murmurers could not complain either that he was withholding from them any portion of the sum which he had promised; or that the sum which they received from him, was not an equitable recompense for their labour. Because he was kind, they were grudging: did that spirit point

them out as worthy objects of bounty? And was not the master to be the judge where it became him to bestow and where to forbear? Was it not lawful for him to do what he would with his own?

I. The principal causes from which discontent proceeds, are selfishness, envy, and pride. The *selfish* man sees with disquiet any good in the possession of his neighbour, because he desires to possess it himself. The *envious* man is disquieted, simply because his neighbour enjoys the gratification of possessing it. The proud man is indignant that others, whom he despises, should possess an advantage of which he deems them unworthy: and doubly indignant, that he is not himself the possessor.

II. Discontent, viewed as an offence against God, is base *ingratitude* to our heavenly benefactor. He has crowned us with numberless blessings. He has mercy upon us, notwithstanding our continual transgressions. He has given his own Son to die for our iniquities. He sets before us a kingdom of everlasting glory. Yet because there is one object which he withholds or resumes, and withholds or resumes because he loves us; we are dissatisfied with his dealings, and slight his immeasurable goodness! When Job had to sustain, in addition to the sudden loss of wealth and children, the severest bodily afflictions, was his language that of a discontented spirit? What! "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." (ii. 10.)

Discontent is *presumption* against the Lord of the whole earth. It forgets that we are his servants. It assumes his prerogative, and aspires to regulate after its own will the works of his hand. We may lay it down as a certain truth, that all the disposals of God are founded on reasons of wisdom, goodness, and equity. Whenever, therefore, God is represented in Scripture as acting arbitrarily, we ought to infer, that the dispensation is wise and good and just, because God so wills it. Shall we then, by the murmurs of discontent, interfere with God in the exercise of his prerogative? or shall we allow that the great Jehovah may do as he wills, with his own?

III. Observe the powerful influence of discontent on morality. *He who loveth God, will love his brother also.* The two great commandments are ever found hand in hand. He who loveth

not God, will not love his brother. So it was in the parable. Of the persons who *murmured against the good man of the house*, under which title the supreme Lord of all is emblematically described, it is at the same time stated, that their *eye was evil* towards their associates.

IV. In order to repress the spirit of discontent, let us reflect on our own demerit. "Another man," you say, "enjoys more of the favours of God than myself, and deserves them less." Deserves them less! *Who art thou that judgest another?* Perhaps, this man's transgressions are fewer than thine. Perhaps, when compared with thee by the Searcher of hearts, he is seen to have offended in the face of fainter light, against inferior instruction, under the contagion of worse example. Be these things as they may, do you deserve the favours which you grudge to your neighbour? Is that grudging spirit an indication of deserving them? Think of the countless benefits which God has showered down upon you; and answer whether, instead of murmuring for an additional blessing, it were not better to be employed in an humble confession, that you have justly incurred the forfeiture of all that you have received.

Farther; attend to the example of your Lord, and of those who after his departure from the world, trod the most carefully in his steps. When the Lord of glory had not where to lay his head; did he repine at the dispensation? *Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God*, was, under every circumstance, the language of his heart. When wearied in the cities by crowds which incessantly pressed upon him to be healed of their diseases and to hear his doctrine, so that he had not time even to eat bread; when precluded from repose in the deserts to which he had retired, by immediate interruptions from new multitudes; when recompensed for his incalculable mercies with disregard, with contempt, with treachery, with persecution, with death; where is the instance, in which a murmur of discontent broke from his lips? Look to his apostles. How diligently did they follow the example which their Master had set before them! He among them who had relinquished the most and had suffered the most, was enabled, through the grace of his Lord, truly to affirm; *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* (Philip. iv. 11.) Look to the early Christians, who proved that they regarded themselves as strangers and

pilgrims upon earth; who, not only when they had food and raiment, were therewith content; not only were not dissatisfied in the total absence of worldly advantages, but took joyfully, —took, be it observed, with a rejoicing heart, the spoiling of their goods; knowing themselves to have in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. (Heb. x. 34.)

Listen to one consideration more. *All things work together for good to them that love God.* Where then is the place for discontent? If you love not God, on what pretence can you desire gifts and favours from him? If you love him, all things work together for your good. The absence of the object for the possession of which you are anxious; the failure of your efforts to acquire it; the final disappointment of your hopes; are working together for your good. What is there farther for you to desire? (GIBBORNE.)

Christ utters the parable of the vineyard let out to unfaithful husbandmen; from which he takes occasion to admonish the Jewish rulers, of the danger and ruin they would incur by the schemes which they were forming against him. MATTHEW, xxi. 33-45; MARK, xii. 1-11; LUKE, xx. 9-18.

THE *owner of the vineyard* is God; *the vineyard*, the Jewish nation; *the husbandmen*, the priests and doctors of the Law; *the servants*, the prophets; *the Son*, our Blessed Lord; *the other husbandmen*, the Gentiles; *the punishment*, the destruction of Jerusalem.

Matt. 33; Mark, 1; Luke, 9: There was a certain master of a family, who planted a vineyard, and spared no cost to render it productive: for he made a fence around it to preserve it from beasts; and digged a wine-press, and under the wine-press, a vat [or cistern] for the grape-juice; and built a tower for receiving the fruit, and for the accommodation of labourers and watchmen, and let it out to husbandmen who were to pay him from the produce; and then went abroad for a considerable time.

Matt. 34-36; Mark, 2-5; Luke, 10-12: And at the season when the time of gathering the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that he might receive his share of the fruit of the vineyard. And the husbandmen caught his servants and severely-scourged one, and sent him away empty; and killed

another; and with stones drove away another. And again he sent unto them other servants more honourable than the first: but they did the same unto them: and him who was the chief, they wounded in the head with stones, and sent him away empty and ignominiously treated.

And again, the third time he sent another: and him also they wounded, and cast him out, and killed him: and many others who came on the same errand, beating some, and killing others.

Matt. 37-39; Mark, 6-8; Luke, 18-15: Then the lord of the vineyard said, *What shall I do? I will send my son to them. Having, therefore, one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also, the last of all, to them; saying, 'Perhaps, they will reverence my son, when they see him.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they discoursed among themselves, saying, 'This is the only heir: come, let us kill him, and seize on his inheritance, that it may be ours.'* And they seized him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

Matt. 40-45; Mark, 9-11; Luke, 15-18: *When, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to those husbandmen? They [the priests and elders] say unto Jesus, 'He will put those wretches to a wretched death, and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, who will render him the fruits in their seasons.'* And when they heard Jesus confirming their words, they said, *'God forbid.'* for they now began to perceive that they had condemned themselves.

Matt. 42, 43; Mark, 10, 11; Luke, 17: *And Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, 'What is this then that is written? Did ye never read this in the Scriptures (Psal. cxviii.), 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes?'* Therefore, on account of the refusal of this stone, I say unto you, *The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation which shall bring forth the fruits thereof.*

Matt. 44; Luke, 18: *And whosoever shall stumble and fall upon this stone, shall be broken and bruised: but on whomsoever the stone itself shall fall, it shall disperse him as chaff.*

The preceding passage is interpreted by referring to the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus. In his humiliation, he is a stone 'despised and rejected' by the builders of the Temple

which was not then completed. In his *exaltation* to his mediatorial kingdom, evinced by his resurrection, ascension, and descent of the Holy Spirit, he is the same, now at length beautified and pronounced fit as the uppermost or head-corner stone, which gives grace, solidity, and union to the spiritual Temple, his Church. In the former case, whoever by stumbling, *falls upon the stone*, or takes offence against Jesus as the Messiah, will not be exempted from severe suffering; *he will be broken* or bruised or injured in his limbs; but by penitence, he may recover from the damage of his fall. In the latter case, on all who wilfully persist in malignant opposition to an *exalted* Messiah, the stone will fall from that lofty eminence to their utter destruction, realised, partially, in the destruction of Jerusalem, and finally in the day of judgment.

THE general purport of this parable is the same as that of *The Murmuring Labourers*; being intended as a vindication of the divine conduct, with respect to the extension of mercy to the Gentiles, in consequence of the obstinate infidelity of the Jewish nation. The chief point of difference between the parables lies in this; the parable of *The Murmuring Labourers* seems to respect the nation in general; whereas the present parable is particularly addressed to the Jewish Rulers, to whose corrupt administration and example he traces back the degeneracy and corruption of the people.

The general contents of this parable may be divided into four points of consideration.

1. The Jewish Church, is often termed *God's vineyard*. His *digging a wine-press* and *building a tower* are expressions, intimating "*the excellent means and advantages of the Jewish Church for religious and moral improvement.*" When the Jews had been transplanted from the slavery of Egypt into the promised land, God vouchsafed to them a religious code, and established them in peace and prosperity, though surrounded by many enemies. "He had not so dealt with any other nation, neither had the heathen knowledge of his laws." When the Jews desired a king, God delegated Judea to rulers first nominated by himself; reserving, however, the right of interference on any occasion according to his own supreme will; and though in this delegation, he (as it were) let out his vineyard to husbandmen, while

he himself had gone into a far country, he did not give up his privilege of demanding from them the fruits of his vineyard ; or, in other words, such returns of duty and obedience as were suitable to the advantages for religious improvement.

2. This reasonable expectation naturally introduces the second branch of the parable, which represents the Master of the vineyard sending his servants, at proper seasons, to receive his share of the fruits, in virtue of the original compact. But as the vices of the people were profitable to their leaders, the prophets of God became the objects of hatred and revenge ; and the Jews, in our Saviour's time, inheriting the malignant spirit of their ancestors, were about to break forth, even with greater outrage and violence, against himself and his disciples.

3. This leads us to consider the third branch of the parable, *the reception experienced by the Messiah.* God sent many messengers to his vineyard. The promise of the Saviour was made to our first parents ; renewed to the Patriarchs ; interwoven in the typical dispensation of the Mosaic Law ; frequently repeated by the mouths of holy prophets, in succeeding ages ; and more immediately announced by the Baptist John. The manifestation of the Messiah *in person* was the last effort of divine mercy in behalf of his people. The generous Master of the vineyard (the type of a forbearing God) reasonably argued, *They will reverence my Son.* " But when the husbandmen saw him, they cast him out of the vineyard and slew him." Such is the striking emblem of the Jewish Rulers, who despised the person of Christ ; blasphemed his doctrine ; and crucified him as a malefactor.

4. This introduces the last branch of the parable ; which is *the sentence of condemnation.* Our Saviour, by skilful address, makes bad men confess their own guilt. Upon hearing the case, the chief priests and Rulers reply, " He will miserably destroy those husbandmen, and will let out his vineyard to others who shall render him the fruits in their season." This sentence of condemnation first pronounced by themselves, was immediately ratified by our Saviour. A new commission was given to the apostles, to establish a purer Church, which should comprehend all nations : and not only were the Jewish rulers deprived of authority in the house of God, and the nation stripped of their peculiar privileges ; but, moreover, God *destroyed them miserably* ; and inflicted upon them the most

dreadful calamities. Their malignity was its own punishment. The Jews, by taking away the life of Jesus, thought to render his name infamous; but Christ "by suffering these things, entered into his glory." He concludes the parable, as pointing out the true intent of it, by citing the prediction of the Psalmist (cxviii.), "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Therefore, I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (DR. A. GRAY.)

When we read this parable, and consider it as levelled at the Jews; let us, at the same time, take heed to ourselves, lest we also fall after the same example of unbelief. God has given to every man some part of his vineyard to cultivate and improve, or some advantages to know and serve him. How ungrateful shall we be, and how miserable, if by wilful impenitence and unbelief, we, in effect, renew the slaughter of his Beloved Son. Whether we hear or whether we forbear, Christ is made the Head of the corner; and on those who deliberately oppose his cause and interest, he will fall like a rock of adamant, and miserably grind them to powder. (DODDRIDGE.)

Christ warns the Jews of the danger which would attend their rejecting the Gospel or resting on an insincere profession of it. In this parable *the King* represents Almighty God; *the Son*, our Saviour; *the marriage feast*, the Gospel; *the servants*, the prophets; the Baptist, the seventy disciples, our Lord himself, the twelve Apostles, and other preachers of the Gospel; *the invited guests*, the Jews; *the second invitation*, the unwearied anxiety of God for the Jews; *farm and merchandise*, the preference of worldly pursuits to spiritual interests; *the armies*, the Romans; *the high-streets*, into which the subordinate streets run, and which are most frequented, the whole Gentile world; *bad and good*, nominal and sincere Christians; the entrance of *the king*, the day of judgment; *the wedding-garment*, Christian holiness.

MATTHEW, xxii. 1: JESUS answered and spake unto them again, in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven [the Gospel-

dispensation] may be compared to a certain king, who made a marriage-feast for his son; and he sent his servants to summon those who had been invited to the nuptial banquet: but they would not come.

4. Again: he sent forth other servants, saying, 'Tell them who were invited, Behold I have prepared my supper; my oxen and my fatted beasts are slain, and all things are ready to be served up to table: come to the marriage-feast.' 5. But they made light of it; and went away; one to his farm; another to his merchandise. 6. And the rest, a third class of invited persons, laying hold of his servants, insulted and slew some of them.

7. And when the king heard it, he was provoked to anger; and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8. Then saith he to the servants, 'The marriage-feast is prepared; but they who were invited, were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the cross-roads [or outlets and passages of the high-ways] and invite to the wedding-banquet as many travellers as ye find.

10. So those servants went out into the cross-roads, and assembled all with whom they met, whether bad or good; and the feast was completely-furnished with guests.

[On these festive occasions, it was usual for the entertainer to provide each of the guests with a long white robe, which might be easily procured, on entering the mansion; so that to appear in an ordinary dress, implied disrespect toward the host.]

11. And when, previously to the banquet, the king came in to view the guests, he saw there a man who had not clothed himself with a wedding-garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how, with what assurance, camest thou in hither 'not having a wedding-garment suited for the occasion?' And he was speechless: he could not contrive the least palliation for his rudeness in violating an established custom.

13. Then the king said to his servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away from the light and splendour of the guest-chamber, and expel him into the outer darkness of the street: there, instead of the joy incident to banquets, shall be nothing but weeping and gnashing of the teeth for anguish and despair.'

14. *For there are many invited to the Gospel-feast; but few chosen in the sense of accepting and finally partaking its blessings.*

I. WE trace in this parable the munificence, benevolence, and gratuitous kindness of the monarch. 1. Our heavenly king did not marry his Son to the Church with a design to add to his own happiness, which was already perfect; but to ennoble his spouse. Nor had she, from nature, any amiable attractions: she was poor and deformed. No argument could move the prince to stoop to so low a match but his own infinite compassion of our miseries: these he condescended to make his own, that so we might share in his glory and happiness. 2. Whereas the guests of princes are usually nobles, at this feast the meaner persons are seated. Christ took not on him the nature of angels, far superior to us in nature and in dignity: but he took on him the seed of Abraham; and those of a higher rank were omitted. 3. The benefit was universal: for though the first offers were made to the people of God, yet the servants, despatched, did not stop at Jerusalem, but went out to the highways, and invited *all, as many as they should find*. With this enlarged hospitality, agrees the apostolic commission, "Go out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." 4. Among men, civility is often less the language than the disguise of the mind. But the importunity of repeated invitations; the anger at being unworthily refused; the care of finding other guests; all these particulars in the conduct of the king, are so many emblems of the sincere anxiety, which influences a God of love and mercy, to promote the spiritual welfare of his creatures.

II. The parable points out some of those hindrances, by which men, in all ages of the world, are kept back from accepting the offers of the Gospel-mercy.

1. Some of the persons invited *would not come*; the indisposition of these men was founded upon *pride*. The Jews, expecting a victorious and temporal Monarch, found in Jesus an humble leader of humble fishermen; and despised both him and his doctrine. In these steps, all tread who are scandalized at the Cross of Christ; and in the pride of reason, despise the faith which must submit to mysteries.

2. Another sort depart, *one to his farm; another, to his*

merchandise. These men are the camels which cannot get through the eye of the needle. While men place their happiness and sole occupation in worldly matters and worldly riches, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

3. A third sort *took the servants, entreated them spitefully, and slew them*. These gave themselves no trouble about making excuses; but gave way to a spirit of malice and cruelty. Such were the crucifiers of our Blessed Lord. Such were the persecutors of the apostles and primitive Christians. Such are all they who under pretence of maintaining the truth, assail those of a contrary opinion with sword and fire, and rend asunder the mystical body of the Redeemer.

III. But though many refuse to come, it is also evident that not all who by coming profess the Gospel, will be saved by it. One person who came to the marriage-feast, was afterwards thrust out, for want of a wedding-garment. 1. The circumstances of a parable are not to be pressed too closely; but it may not be amiss to consider *the wedding-garment* as denoting works done out of a *principle of sincere obedience, founded upon the love of God*. A formal show of religion is thus contrasted with inward holiness. This distinction may escape the discernment of human eyes: but God, in the day of judgment, will sever not only the openly righteous and the openly wicked; but will also distinguish between him who is righteous in reality, and him who is righteous in appearance.

We are thus warned that to be received into the congregation of the faithful, to join in the same prayers, to perform some outward acts of piety,—all these things will avail us nothing, if we are not sincere in heart. The unworthy comer had not a greater share of the feast than they who came not at all: and the matter will be the same with hypocrites and unbelievers; since the Great Judge has declared, that the portion of both will be in a place of darkness and of weeping. (Matt. xxiv. 51.)

2. The justice of this sentence of condemnation, the condemned person will feel himself compelled to acknowledge. The person in the parable, *was speechless*, from the feelings of guilt. Of all men, pretended Christians will have the least excuse for wicked lives: inasmuch as they have lived not only in opposition to the laws of God, but in constant contradiction to the dictates of their own conscience.

IV. We may draw from this parable much important instruction, relative to spiritual calls.

1. Commonly speaking, God calls us by the outward ministry of his word, and by the stated means of grace. The servants of the king answer to God's ministers, regularly sent and appointed in his Church, to proclaim the tidings and explain the terms of salvation. It becomes, therefore, a matter of apprehension, that persons who deem the ministry inefficient to awaken them to repentance, and are waiting for some especial and distinct call,—may not be indulging the delusions of melancholy; or be a prey to the suggestions of Satan who knows that delay is the broad road to destruction. The king, in the parable, deemed the refusal given to his messengers, as an affront to himself; and the ruin of the Jews arose from not hearing the prophets whom he had sent. What was the destruction of the Jews, may be ours.

2. We infer from the refusals on the part of the invited, that though God calls men in such a manner as renders their absence inexcusable, yet he does it not (ordinarily) in such a manner as is irresistible. Men are reproached, in Scripture, for *resisting, grieving, quenching* the Holy Spirit. Let us humbly and gratefully acknowledge that all the glory of our salvation is due to God working *in us and with us*; but we err in supposing that salvation can be wrought *without us*. Even the miraculous conversion of St. Paul was owing, in part, to the honest disposition which dictated the words, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" The tongues of Angels signify little, if men obstinately stop their ears. The seed of grace is vainly imparted, with a liberal hand, to the hard-beaten high-road or to a rocky soil. The Jews have put this point beyond dispute: they were neither convinced by the miracles nor persuaded by the words of Jesus; and yet he declares that he did among them *the works which no other man did*; and they themselves confessed that *he spoke as never man spoke*. (STANHOPE.)

Christ enforces his exhortations to watchfulness, by the Parable of the Ten Virgins. MATTHEW, xxv. 1-13.

THEN, in that day of account, *the state of things under the*

Gospel-dispensation may be illustrated by the case of Ten Virgins, who, being invited to a marriage-feast, took their torches, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2. Now five of them were provident, and five careless: they that were careless, took their torches, but did not take any oil with themselves, besides what was at first applied: whereas the provident took a reserve of oil in their flasks which they carried with their torches. 5. But while the bridegroom delayed in coming out of the bridal-house, they all became drowsy, and fell asleep. 6. And at midnight, there was a loud exclamation made in the street, Behold, the bridegroom is coming: come ye forth to meet him.

7. Then all those virgins arose from sleep, and trimmed their torches.

8. And the improvident said to the provident, Give to us some of your oil: for our torches are going out. 9. But the provident replied, saying, Not so: lest there be not enough for us and you: but go rather ye to them that sell oil, and buy for yourselves. 10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom and his retinue came: and those maidens who were ready, went in with him into the bridal-house; and the door was shut.

11. And some time after, the other virgins also came, saying, Sir, Sir, open the doors to us. 12. But he answered them, saying, Truly, I say unto you, I know you not: I do not look upon you as the companions of my bride.

13. Watch ye, therefore: for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh.

v. 1: After the connubial union was solemnly ratified, it was customary for the bridegroom in the evening, to conduct his spouse from her friends, to his own house, with all the pomp that could be crowded into the procession. The bridegroom invited his young female friends and relations to add numbers to his retinue: these took lamps and waited in a company near the house, till the bride and bridegroom issued forth; with whom they joined in the train, to the bridegroom's house. (HORNE, vol. iii. p. 409.)

1. We may observe, in this parable, the charitable decorum which our blessed Saviour keeps, as in other parables: as if he would fain suppose that amongst those who enjoy the Gospel,

the number of those who make a sincere profession of it, is equal to the number of those who fall off from it. If one son took riotous courses, another was constant in filial duty. He who had five talents, made them five more; he that had two, gained other two. If five of the ten virgins were imprudent, the other five were provident.

Though it may be doubted whether this inference be fairly drawn from the parable, it is, however, thus far instructive, that we ourselves should be so far from confining the Church of Christ within a narrow compass; that, on the contrary, we should extend our charity to all Christians, of what denomination soever, as far as their regard to the foundations of Gospel-truth will permit us to hope well of them. It is far better to err a little on the favourable and charitable part, than to indulge the censorious and damning spirit: an odious temper which to the infinite scandal of the Gospel, has prevailed upon some Christians to that notorious degree, as not only to shut out all the Reformed part of the Western Church under the appellation of *heretics*; but likewise to unchurch all the other Churches of the Christian world that do not own subjection to the pope, by declaring it "to be of *necessity to salvation for every creature to be subject to the Roman bishop.*" Though, in judging of ourselves, we ought to remember that *the gate is strait, and few find it*; yet, in judging of others, we ought to remember that the Captain of our Salvation brings *many* sons to glory.

We may observe, how little is to be done to any good purpose in the great work of preparation for death and future judgment, if the necessary labour be postponed. In what a sad confusion were the imprudent virgins, when, at the sudden coming of the bridegroom, they were not only asleep; but when, after being awakened, they found themselves altogether unprovided with what was necessary to trim their torches, at that very instant, but what could not be provided at an instant. The case of a dying sinner is not much more hopeful. How little is it that a sick man can do in such a strait of time, in the midst of so much pain and weakness of body, in such amazement and confusion of mind! With what face can he apply himself to God in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his life! How can he have the confidence to hope that God will hear his cries and regard his tears, which are

forced from him in this day of necessity? How can he who would not know, in that his day, the things which belonged to his peace, expect any other but that they should now be for ever hid from his eyes, which are ready to be closed in utter darkness?

Without pronouncing that a death-bed repentance is impossible, it is at all events most hazardous; and receives no encouragement from the present parable. While the imprudent virgins were buying oil, the bridegroom had entered his house: and the door was closed. In vain did they importune for admission: the only answer vouchsafed to them was, "I know you not." A late repentance, therefore, *may* be unavailing. *The door was shut.* The state of sinners and of saints will then be unalterably fixed. Death has closed the door of grace. This is the shutting of the door of the ark: when Noah had entered, he was preserved: all the rest were finally abandoned.

When the imprudent virgins applied to the provident for a portion of oil, the answer was, "There may *not* be *enough* for *us and you.*" Though we have benefit, by the communion of saints, from the prayers of others, yet our own sanctification is necessary to our own salvation. Those that have most grace, have none to spare. The best have need to borrow from Christ; but they have none to lend to any of their neighbours.

And yet the Romish Church maintains, that there are some persons so excellently good, that they may do more than their own salvation needs. When, therefore, they have paid down to God what he cannot but allow to be a full and valuable consideration for eternal happiness, they may begin a new score and work for their friends. The bank or fund of this surplusage is kept at Rome; and those who never took care to have a righteousness of their own, may receive, at the discretion of the pope, indulgencies and pardons for any species of wickedness. What can be more contrary to Holy Writ, than to imagine that any living soul can have any superfluous merit to make satisfaction for the sins of others; whereas all that any man is capable of suffering, cannot suffice to satisfy for the least sin of his own, "the wages of which is death;" or that those imaginary superfluous merits should come in aid of the infinite and perfectly meritorious offering of the Son of God, which is fully sufficient to make satisfaction for *all* sins; or that this supposed treasury should

be kept under the key of some one sinful man. But such are the impious absurdities, to which the idolatrous Church of Rome exposes herself, when she abandons the rule of Holy Scripture, and follows her own vain and fond inventions.

Lastly. Let the general inference from this parable turn upon the application which our Saviour himself suggests: 'Watch: for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.' The event is certain: the time, uncertain. This warning voice of our Lord is necessary even for the more considerate Christians, who are not *always* so vigilant as they ought to be. "While the bridegroom tarried, they *all* slept." Even the disciples of our Saviour, whilst he was personally present and had given them an especial charge to *watch and pray*, could not watch with him, even for one hour. If we would not be surprised, we must look on every hour as the last. We stay abundantly too late, when we stay until the hour of death, ere we begin to think seriously of our salvation. The door may be shut. Dreadful and fatal words! No hope remains. Nothing but death shuts this door: but death may surprise us in our sins; and then despair is our portion. The day of grace has its limits: and for those who have trifled it away, there remaineth nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever. (ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON, chiefly.)

Christ repeats the parable of the talents, in a form something different from that recorded by St. Luke, xix. 13. MATTHEW, XXV. 14-30.

14. *For the Son of Man will be, in administering justice at his coming, as a man who going abroad, called his servants together, and committed his goods unto them.* 15. *And to one of them, he gave five talents; to another, two; and to another, one; to every man according to his several ability of managing the sum; and immediately went abroad.*

16. *Then he who had received the five talents, went and traded with them, and gained five talents more.* 17. *And in like manner, he who had received the two, he also gained two more.* 18. *But he who had received the one, went and digged a hole in the ground, and buried his master's money.*

19. *After a considerable time, the master of those servants*

cometh-home, and holdeth his account with them. 20. And so he who had received the five talents, came and brought five other talents; saying, 'Sir, thou didst commit to me five talents: behold, I have gained in addition to them five other talents.' 21. And his master said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things: I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy master, and share with me in the banquet prepared for myself and my friends, on this occasion of my return.'

22. He, also, who had received the two talents, came and said, 'Sir, thou didst commit to me two talents: behold, by trafficking I have gained two other talents to them.' 23. His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things: I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'

24. Then he also who had received the one talent, came and said, 'Sir, I knew that thou art a hard [or, griping] man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou hadst not scattered: 25, and fearing lest I might lose thy money, which, though lost, thou wouldst severely exact from me, I went and buried thy talent in the ground: lo! there thou hast thine own again, without any diminution.'

26. And his master answered and said, 'Thou malignant and slothful servant! thou knewest that I was so unreasonable a man that I reap where I did not sow, and expect to gather up from where I had not scattered seed. 27. Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the bankers; and thus, when I came, I might have received mine own with the common interest.' 28. And then turning to the attendants, he said, 'Take ye, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him who hath ten talents, as an additional token of my favour: 29, for unto every one that really hath by improving his possessions, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him who, in one sense, hath not, in consequence of neglecting to improve what he hath, even what he actually hath, shall be taken away. 30. And cast ye the useless servant from the illuminated banquet-room into the darkness which is without: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

WE learn from the parable that it is the appointment of infinite wisdom, that the talents of men should be various,

adjusted, both in their kind and proportion, to the diversity of offices which human life requires to be supplied. But, though the gifts of men be, for these wise reasons, unequal in themselves, yet none can with justice repine at the donor, since, be it more or less that is bestowed on him, it is all pure, unmerited favour. Each ought, therefore, to be satisfied with his portion, and instead of envying the more liberal allotments of another, apply himself to the improvement of his own.

The parable further implies that the gifts, both of nature and of grace, cannot continue long in one stay: unless we go forward, we shall go backward, and lose ground. God gives us a stock to manage equal to the expected service: but if we are slothful and will not apply it to the purposes for which it was given, he will recall the useless gift. Take from him the talent, and give it to him that hath ten talents. It is therefore of the utmost importance to us, to attend diligently to the improvement of all the talents committed to us; because if they are not improved, our powers will be weakened, and we shall forfeit those assistances which should enable us to retrieve our miscarriage.

Now the proper improvement of all God's gifts to us, is employing them to the promotion of his glory. We may cultivate our understanding by learning and study; but if our end be only to gratify our curiosity or our vanity, this is not serving God, but ourselves. So likewise we may increase our portion of God's outward gifts; but if we apply them only to the enlargement of our own conveniences, this is not the improvement our Master expects. On the other hand, if by the advantages of learning we excel in spiritual understanding; explain and enforce the doctrines of the gospel; and correct the errors of our brethren; or if, by riches and authority we promote the service of God; and relieve the indigence of the poor; when we thus apply these gifts of God, as instruments by which we bring into action the graces of his Spirit, he infuses into our hearts; these are improvements which God, in the day of our account, will acknowledge to us, in proportionable allotments of reward and glory.

The parable teaches that an account will be demanded of every talent; from him who has received five, of the whole five; and from him who has received ten, of the whole ten; and consequently, it will not be admitted, as a sufficient plea of

diligence, that we have made *some* improvement, unless the improvement be *answerable* to the number and value of our gifts. Should he, who had received five talents, have gained only one, when he might, as he was bound, have gained five; he must have been censured as even more criminal than he who had been unprofitable in one. For each of his five talents was given with the same trust, and was as capable of improvement as the other's one. And the neglect of misapplying four, is certainly greater than misapplying one. And by parity of reason we may conclude, that if he who has received but two talents, shall gain five, his reward from his master will be greater than his who makes only the same improvement of five; because his improvement, in proportion to his receipts, is more than double to the others. This is directly taught in the 19th of St. Luke, where the same subject is treated, though in a different view. The stock, committed to each servant, is there supposed equal, but increased in various measures; by one, five-fold; by another, ten-fold; and agreeably their reward is proportioned to the improvement made by each; the one is made ruler over five cities; the other, over ten.

We learn, further, from the sentence passed on the unprofitable servant, with what severity our unfaithfulness in this trust will be resented by God. The plea of that servant may seem to offer something, which might entitle him to excuse, though not commendation. "Lo, there thou hast what is thine." But the weakness of this plea appears when we consider, that the increase was as much due to his lord as the original stock; and consequently, the suggestion was false: he did not render to his master what was his, but only one part of what he owed him; and was, therefore, condemned to utter darkness.

Our blessed Lord has descended no lower in the criminal character, than a negative guilt, in not using the talent at all; but alas! how many are there who abuse the gifts of God to sin; and make the abilities his goodness has bestowed on them, the instruments of offending him! How frequently do we see great endowments of mind or fortune devoted wholly to the service of men's lusts! And if the idle and unfruitful servant, who only sat still when he ought to have been active, shall be cast into utter darkness; how heavy will be their sentence, who have

been active in evil; who have employed the very arms they received from heaven, in rebellion against it!

It concerns us, then, to examine ourselves whether we have acted up to the abilities and opportunities God has given us of promoting his glory; and diligently attended to the means afforded to us of growing wiser and better. Do we find ourselves advanced in spiritual knowledge and understanding, in piety and holiness of life, in purity, meekness, and charity, in a measure proportionable to the assistances and instruction we have had? With respect to those outward talents God has entrusted with us, have we faithfully employed them to the promotion of his honour, in the exercise of Christian graces, in such works of devotion, justice, or mercy, as his word commands? If our conscience can acquit us as diligent and faithful, still we must remember, that it is our duty to go to further proficiencies. For every progress in grace, though our own endeavours co-operate in making it, is yet the gift of God; and when received is an accession to our talents; it enlarges our abilities; and consequently adds to our duty.

But, alas! which of us has improved every gift of God to all the fruits it was capable of producing? Or if he has been faithful in some talents, has not neglected others? The most circumspect piety will, in the day of account, have much to be forgiven; and must expect his reward rather from the mercy of his judge, than the merit of his service. Let us, then, all labour to atone for our failings by sincere contrition, and shew forth fruits meet for repentance, by an attentive application of every hour remaining to us, remembering that the Judge standeth at the door. The night of death comes, when no man can work; and the days of probation expire. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us address ourselves to the work of our Lord, to correct our errors, and finish what is yet imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election sure. (ROGERS.)

Separation of the Wicked and the Just in the Day of Judgment. MATTHEW, xiii. 47-50.

THE kingdom of heaven is like unto a drag-net, cast into the sea, which gathered-in fishes of every kind, both bad and good: 48, which, when it was full, the fishermen hauled-up to the shore; and sitting down for the purpose of careful and leisurely examination, gathered the good into vessels, but cast away the putrid. 49. So it will be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth in the general resurrection; and sever the wicked from among the just; 50, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth, for rage and despair.

THIS parable was evidently designed to convey to the disciples the same meaning with that of the tares: only it may be observed, that, in this parable, our Lord entirely omits his own character and agency in the transaction; and presents to view only the final distinction and separation of good and bad men, as affected by the ministry of Angels. Our Saviour makes use of the figure of a sweep-net cast into the sea, perhaps, as being very familiar to his disciples, who, some of them, were fishermen.

The kingdom of heaven, or the future state, is like a sweep-net, which was cast into the sea, and gathered every kind of fish. Equally mixed and undistinguished, in this world, are the characters of those who profess the Gospel, which as it is preached promiscuously to all, gathers in persons of all sorts; and hypocrites, as well as true believers, are brought into the visible Church. But an exact survey will finally be taken of the whole. All men shall be raised from the dead, every one in his own order, and all pass into the future state. But as the net when it was full, was drawn to the shore, and the fishermen sat down to examine their capture, and separated the good into vessels, and cast the dead or putrid away; so shall it be at the end of the world. As men distinguish, select, and carefully preserve things of value and which are fit for some good purpose; but cast away things that are vile and useless, or consume them in the fire; so mankind themselves shall be disposed-of in the future state, according to the same method and rule, by the distinguishing judgment of superior beings, under the direction of our Saviour who is the Lord and judge of all.

It is evident that our Lord never contemplated a complete

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purity in the Church while militant on earth : in all the emblems of the Church, there is a mixture of good and evil. In the ark, were beasts clean and unclean : in the field, wheat and tares : in the drag-net, fishes valuable and worthless. When, therefore, we profess to believe (as in our Church-creed) in a *Holy Church*, we term the Church *holy*, as being dedicated to a holy God ; established by a holy Saviour ; intended as a separation from an unholy world ; regulated by holy ordinances ; and as training its children to holiness, " without which no man shall see the Lord."

Let us remember that it is not enough to be nominal Christians, or possessed of the common privileges of the Church. The day of final separation will come : and the Angels, employed in the work, will not overlook us, but conduct us to the abodes of the righteous or the wicked. To be condemned by a human judicature, and put to death in this world as criminals unfit for society, and unworthy of life ; to be made examples of punishment, and exposed as spectacles of disgrace and ruin, — is a scene full of horror and misery. But no sufferings in this world, no temporal death, can be supposed equal to the misery and destruction of sinners in another world, condemned to death eternal. O, that we may not then be cast, with abhorrence, into the furnace of fire ; but now seriously realizing to ourselves this awful day, of which our Lord has given us such repeated prospects, may we so judge ourselves, that we may not then be condemned by him. (BOURN, chiefly.)

In the son who professed obedience, our Lord censures the Pharisees, who knowing the divine authority of John's baptism, obeyed not his instructions : the repentant son is the emblem of open sinners, willing to be reformed. MATTHEW, xxi. 28-32.

28. *BUT what think ye ? A man had two sons : and he came to the first, and said, ' Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.'* 29. *And he rudely answered and said, ' I will not :' but afterward, he changed his mind and went.*

30. *And he came to the second, and said in the same manner : and he answered, with smooth complaisance, and said, ' Sir, I am*

going : ' and yet he went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father ? They say unto him, ' The former.'

31. Then Jesus saith to them, ' Notwithstanding your professions of reverence for God, ye reject his Gospel : and verily I say unto you, That notorious and abandoned sinners, such as the publicans and the harlots, are more open to conviction, and shew you the way into the kingdom of God. 32. For ye know in your consciences, that John came to you in a way leading to righteousness and justification, and yet ye believed him not : but the publicans and the harlots believed him : and ye, even when ye saw his mission thus confirmed by its results, did not afterward change your minds so as to believe him. (LUKE, vii. 29, 30.)

THE primary application of this parable refers to the Pharisees. They professed great reverence for the law ; but in their conduct, did not exhibit one principle of vital religion ; and by paying the tithe of mint and anise, considered themselves absolved from the duties of mercy and justice. Persons, thus inflated with the presumption of self-righteousness, might readily answer, *Sir, I am going* ; but afterwards, fancying that their moral state needed not improvement, content themselves with lip-service, and *go not*. On the other hand, the publicans and harlots refused to enter the vineyard of God ; but being awakened by the Baptist, to a sense of their guilty condition, and having no Pharisaical self-righteousness as an impediment in the path of repentance, they are eager to have their former disobedience forgotten in a prompt and zealous compliance.

These two classes of persons are to be found in all ages of the Church. But the most specious pretences of piety signify little, if they are not animated by the heart, and confirmed by the life. Vain are all the complimentary forms of religion when addressed to that God who penetrates all the secrets of the soul, and can have complacency in nothing but real and solid goodness. Yet many are there, who are free of their promises both to God and man, but always fail when the time of performance comes. Many, with these unhappy rulers in Israel, go on to pride themselves in a kind of external nearness to God ; who are themselves so far from his kingdom, that even publicans and harlots, who did not pretend to any religion, are more like to be brought into it than they, as being more open to a conviction of

their sin and danger, and so more ready to embrace an offered Saviour. Persons, openly profane, have nothing by which they can defend themselves against the terrors of God, when once they begin to fasten upon their consciences. Whereas, hypocrites, having a form of godliness, screen themselves therewith from all the attacks that can be made upon them by the strongest arguments drawn, whether from reason, or from the word of God. Let us dread the guilt of receiving the grace of God in vain; lest by rejecting the privileges we enjoy, our hearts be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, so as to perish in impenitence and unbelief.

The parable inculcates upon us great Christian caution, in passing judgment upon others, from no other evidence than the casualty of outward appearance. There have ever been two sorts of men, so different from each other in appearance, that one would hardly imagine them to belong to the same species of creatures, the devout and the profane. If we were to form an opinion of them from their mere aspect, we should pronounce the one to be full of piety, exceedingly conscientious; and the other, to be regardless of all sacred ties and moral obligations. But possibly, while the tongue is uttering the language of praise or supplication, the heart may be fraught with pride, envy, and all unrighteousness. On the other hand, where appearances are most unpromising, God may be waiting for those whom we too hastily deem reprobate: the seeds of grace are secretly thriving in their hearts. They are unwrought jewels, crusted over with a coarse and rugged outside.

Blessed is the true child of God who combines profession with practice; who not only says, *Sir, I go*; but actually does go. In all the various circumstances of life, his conduct is the index of his heart. He is one and the same, at church and at home. By his sincerity, he commendeth himself to the approbation of him who said, "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father who is in heaven." It was a severe censure which the prophet Isaiah passed upon the ancient Israelites, "This people draw nigh unto me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." Without a life devoted to the honour of God, in an earnest endeavour after the observance of Christian virtues, the most humble con-

fessions of sin and the most solemn vows of obedience avail nothing. The parable thus affords a test, by which we are to form a judgment of ourselves and of our own condition. If we be conscious of living in the habitual practice of any vice, let us not flatter ourselves that resolutions of amendment will be accepted in room of actual reformation.

This parable affords great encouragement to those who have forsaken the right way, to return to the path of their duty. The language of that long-suffering and forbearance with which God treats his frail and erring creatures, is, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy upon him. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Lastly, though the character of a sincere penitent is preferable to that of a hypocritical pretender to religion, there is a third character more excellent than either; that of the man who, through the whole course of his life, pursues a uniform and steady course of obedience to the will of God. Although the design with which our Saviour delivered the parable, did not lead him to extend it beyond the two cases of the son who promised to go into his father's vineyard, but went not,—and of him who at first refused to go, but afterwards went,—a third case may be supposed, which will imply more merit than either; namely, that of a son who said, *I go, sir*; and immediately went as he had promised. So, in the moral conduct of life, as it respects our Supreme Judge to whom we are accountable for our actions, though repentance be better than hypocrisy, innocence is still better than repentance. If the man be happy "whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered;" still happier is he who by a steady course of conscientious obedience to the laws of God, escapes the pangs of remorse, and the numerous evils from which even reformation cannot wholly exempt those who have been sinners. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who seek him with their whole heart."

Importunity in Prayer. LUKE, xi. 5-10.

AND Jesus said unto them, *Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves: 6, for a friend of mine, on his journey, has come to me; and I have nothing to set before him.'* 7. *And he from within shall answer and say, 'Disturb me not: the door is now shut for the night: my servants and myself are gone to-bed: I cannot rise and give thee.'* 8. *I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him the loaves, because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity at least, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.* 9. *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 10, for every one that asketh with holy unwearied fervour, receiveth; and he that diligently seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh again and again, it shall at length be opened.*

v. 5: In the hot countries of the East, journeys were often performed in the night.

AFTER our Lord had given to his disciples a form of prayer, he subjoins, as an encouragement to pray, that importunity in holy prayer will be crowned with success.

Indifference is a great enemy to the success of prayer: because lukewarmness is an undervaluing of God and of religion: it is like the fantastic fires of the night, where there is light, but no heat. St. James, therefore, in speaking of effective prayer, not only requires that the petitioner be a *just* man, but that his prayer be *fervent*. For consider what a huge indecency it is, that a man should speak to God for a thing which he values not; or that he should not value a thing, without which he cannot be happy. If our prayer be for temporal things, we desire them greedily, and prefer them before our duty. We ask them to our hurt and hindrance, and yet delight in the purchase; and when we do pray for them, we can hardly bring ourselves to submit to God's will; but will have them, whether he be pleased or no. But for spiritual things, for the interest of our souls, we pray to God with just such a zeal as a condemned man desires his executioner quickly to put him out of his pain, by taking away his life. And yet the things of religion and the Spirit, are the only things that ought to be desired

vehemently and pursued passionately; because God hath set such a value upon them, that they are the effects of his greatest loving-kindness; they are the purchases of Christ's blood, and the effect of his continual intercession. And if we can have fondnesses for things indifferent or dangerous; our prayers upbraid our spirits, when we beg coldly and tamely for those things which are more precious than the globes of kings, weightier than imperial sceptres, and richer than the spoils of the sea.

We come to God because it is a general custom, but neither drawn thither by love, nor pinched by spiritual necessities and pungent apprehensions. We say so many prayers, because we are resolved so to do; and we pass through them, sometimes with a little attention, sometimes with none at all. Can we expect that our sins should be washed by a lazy prayer? Can an indifferent prayer rescue us from an eternal sorrow? Is Satan so slight and easy an enemy that he will fly away from us at the first word, spoken without power, and without vehemence? Read and attend to the accents of the prayers of saints. *I cried day and night before thee, O Lord! my soul refused comfort; my throat is dry with calling upon my God; my knees are weak through fasting; and, let me alone,* says God to Moses; and, *I will not let thee go till thou hast blessed me,* said Jacob to the angel. Though your person be as gracious as David, and your desires as holy as the love of angels, and your necessities great as a new penitent; yet it pierces not the clouds unless it be also as loud as thunder, and clamorous as necessity. Every prayer we make, is considered by God; but cold prayers are not put into the account; but are laid aside like the buds of roses, which a cold wind hath nipt into death. And when, in order to your hopes of obtaining a great blessing, you reckon up your prayers, with which you have solicited your suit in the court of heaven; you must reckon, not by the number of the prayers themselves, but by your sighs and the fervour of your spirit. Christ prayed with "loud cryings;" and St. Paul made mention of his scholars, in his prayers, night and day. Fall upon your knees, and grow there; and let not your zeal remit. Remember to how great a God you speak; therefore, let not your devotions be little. Remember how great a need thou hast; let not your desires be less. Remember how great is the

thing you pray for; do not undervalue it with thy indifferency. Remember, that prayer is an act of religion; let it, therefore, be made thy business: and lastly, remember, that God hates a cold prayer; and therefore it shall always be ineffectual.

Under this title of lukewarmness, may be comprised also this caution: that a good man's prayers are sometimes hindered by *want of perseverance*. The prayer lives like the repentance of Simon Magus; or the trembling of Felix. But if we would secure the blessing of our prayers, we must never leave till we have obtained what we need. Israel prevailed no longer than Moses held up his hands in prayer: and he was forced to continue his prayer till the going down of the sun; that is, till the danger was over. Whatsoever you need, ask it of God as long as you want it; even till you obtain it. For God many times defers to grant, that thou mayest persevere to ask; and because every prayer is a glorification of God, by the confessing many of his attributes. A lasting and persevering prayer is a little image of the hallelujahs and services of eternity: it is a continuation to do that, according to our measures, which we shall be doing to eternal ages. (Bishop J. TAYLOR.)

Publicans and sinners attend our Lord's instruction. He vindicates, by the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Drachma, his readiness to receive them. LUKE, xv. 1-10.

1. *THEN drew near unto him many tax-gatherers and heathens, for to hear him.* 2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man taketh pleasure in sinners, and eateth with them, as guest.*

3. *And Jesus spake this parable unto them, saying, 4, Who of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the pastures of the desert, and go in search of that which was lost, until he find it?* 5. *And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* 6. *And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost.'* So, I say unto you, *That greater joy will be in heaven over one reformed sinner, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need not reformation.*

8. *Or what woman, having ten drachmas, if she lose one of them, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and search carefully till she find it?* 9. *And when she hath found it, she calleth her female-friends and neighbours together, saying, 'Rejoice with me: for I have found the drachma which I had lost.'* 10. *So I say unto you, There is joy among the angels of God over one reformed sinner.*

THE supercilious and self-righteous Pharisees affected to despise our Lord's charitable endeavours for the reformation of sinners. Our Saviour, in these two parables, insists that the reformation even of the most profligate sinners, such as the publicans generally were, was an object of great importance, not only to the happiness of the persons themselves, but to the glory of God; and, in some sense, conducive to the felicity of Blessed Spirits.

I. In considering the circumstances of these Parables, as leading to these important points of instruction, the first thing is the representation of the unhappy state of every man, while he remains under the dominion of sin.

1. He is compared to a lost sheep, which has gone astray from the sheep-fold; a very natural image of the case, and frequently used by the sacred writers. "I have *gone astray*," says David, "*like a lost sheep*; seek thy servant." The slave of vicious lusts breaks through those sacred enclosures, where God feeds the people of his pasture, and wanders without reflection, amidst the precipices of vice, in hazard every moment of everlasting perdition. Like a lost sheep, he has neither ability nor inclination to return to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. He is exposed to the assaults of Satan, that "roaring lion, who goes about seeking whom he may devour."

I. 2. The next parable represents the same object in a similar, yet different point of light. 'God made man upright,' bearing resemblance to himself in his intellectual and moral attributes. But man, being left to the freedom of his will, degenerated from the rectitude of his nature, so that his original glory is departed from him. In this state of moral corruption, he is compared to a piece of beautiful coin, for a time lost in the dust of the earth, where its former lustre is miserably tarnished, and its value diminished. We find the same similitude of

debased coin used in the sacred Scriptures in other places, to express the corruption and degeneracy of the heaven-born soul, through the prevalence of vicious passions. "How is the gold become dim." "Thy silver is become dross." As a piece of coin, lost in the dust of the earth, is of no value; so the soul, until it be sanctified and renewed by the Spirit of God, is lost to God and the noble purposes of its being.

II. The second thing represented in the parable, is the solicitude of our heavenly Father, to reclaim sinners from their vicious courses, and save them from everlasting perdition.

1. He is compared to a faithful shepherd, ever watchful for the safety of his flock. When one of them strays from the fold, he goes in quest of the thoughtless wanderer; and having found it, he endeavours to lead it back with his friendly crook, and to replace it among the rest of the flock. This is a metaphor, used in Scripture, to express the tender concern of the Father of mercies for impenitent sinners. "The Lord is my shepherd. He shall feed his flock, like a shepherd." Thus our Saviour terms himself *The Good Shepherd*. (John, x. 11.) The same comfortable truth is taught in the diligence of the woman, who carefully sought and recovered the piece of silver coin which was lost. In the two cases supposed, God is represented as so deeply interested in the recovery even of one soul that is ready to perish, as for a time seemingly to neglect the care of those who are in no such hazard; nay, rejoicing in the success of his labours, as if some real honour and felicity did accrue to himself from it. The same thing is confirmed by many express declarations in holy Scripture. "As I live (saith the Lord) I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

This repentance of sinners is represented as a matter of joy in heaven. God is represented, after the manner of men, as feeling a more sensible pleasure in the repentance of one sinner, than in the continued obedience of ninety and nine comparatively righteous persons, who, having never gone astray into such licentious courses, are not in the same hazard of everlasting perdition; even as a father rejoices more in the unexpected recovery of one son who was given over for dead, than in the health and safety of his other children whom yet he loves with equal tenderness. It is not unusual for us to be more sensibly

affected by an unexpected advantage, than by the continuance of more valuable things which we have long enjoyed.

This joy in heaven may be considered in reference to God who is not willing that any should perish; but especially in reference to the Blessed Jesus, our benevolent Intercessor. Is he not exalted as a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins? The conversion even of one sinner that repenteth, is a new trophy erected to the glory of his grace; a new gem added to his celestial crown. His joy will then be full, when he shall have delivered up the mediatorial kingdom to his Father, that God may be all in all.

The angels to whom our Saviour alludes, must feel a joy in a more literal sense. They congratulated with ecstasy the Saviour's birth; they cannot but rejoice, when redemption, wrought by their king, shall have brought additions of just men to participate in their own eternal felicity.

The representation of universal joy in heaven, occasioned by the repentance of sinners, is a powerful motive to engage them to forsake their sins. We are not only assured, from the plain import of these parables, that God is willing to restore them to favour; but that he rejoiceth in their recovery, as if a real accession to his glory and felicity resulted from that event.

The same consideration should engage us to promote, as far as we have power, the salvation of others. Our Saviour himself assures us, that by promoting the conversion of a sinner, we shall fulfil the joy of the Blessed God and Father of all; of Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant; and of an innumerable company of angels. We shall fulfil our own joy also: for 'they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever.' (Dr. A. GRAY.) See my "*Second Course of Sermons*," vol. ii. p. 28.

Our Saviour impresses the necessity of vigilance, in the parable of the Good and Evil Servant: MATTHEW, xxiv. 43-51.

THIS ye know, that if the householder had known in what watch of the night the thief would have come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be dug-through. 44. Be ye, therefore, also ready: for in an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man

cometh. 45. *Who then is, and where shall we find, the faithful and prudent servant, whom his master has appointed steward over his other servants, to distribute to them their portion of food at the stated time?* 46. *Happy is that servant, whom his lord, on his return, shall find thus employed in his duties.* 47. *Verily, I say unto you, That he will make him director of all his estate.* 48. *But if that servant, being evil, shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;* 49, *and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants who are more faithful than himself, and to eat and drink with the riotous part of them;* 50, *the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expects not,* 51, *and shall (as it were) cut him asunder with the scourge, and appoint him his portion with the perfidious unbelieving servants: there shall be weeping and gnashing of their teeth.*

v. 45 : A certain quantity of food (usually corn) was allowed to slaves either monthly or daily. (SMITH, Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antiqu. p. 874.)

OUR Saviour's general admonitions respecting Christian vigilance are strongly enforced by the parable of the Evil Servant. It consists of *four* leading particulars: 1, his unbelief: 2, his careless life: 3, his being surprised: 4, his condemnation.

1. The evil servant appears to have deceived himself; and said in his heart, 'My lord delayeth his coming.' He laid it down as a principle of action, that because the reckoning was distant, it was none at all. His lord had been absent so long, and often to no purpose threatened to return, that he began to disbelieve that he ever would return.

And does not the world cry out with one common voice, 'My Lord delayeth his coming;' or with the scoffers in the days of St. Peter, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' If in a large company of people, commonly called by the name of Christians, you should mention the coming of our Saviour, as an event soon to be expected, they would be ready to laugh at your simplicity. And is not this a proof, that they have a secret satisfaction in putting away all thought of their Master's second appearance in the world?

2. Principle and practice have as natural a dependence upon each other, as cause and effect. The evil servant begins with

thinking as an infidel, and then proceeds to act as a brute: he begins to "smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken."

When faith is gone, then the heart is given up to the service of the world. Immoral and sensual practices are the natural offspring of some false delusive principle, which is first 'said in the heart.' Neither can man follow his own corrupt inclinations, till he has either denied or perverted the revealed will of God.

3. The parable teaches us, that although a man may cheat his understanding for a while, the deception is not long to be enjoyed. The day which he puts off, will certainly come, and be more terrible for being unexpected. "The Lord of that Servant shall come in a day when he *looketh not* for him, and in an hour that he is *not aware of*." When Moses was forgotten by the Israelites, he came and surprised them in the midst of their idolatry. Though Noah, the preacher of righteousness, forewarned his contemporaries, of the impending deluge, they believed not till the flood came and swept them away. In the days of Lot, they were secure in their pleasures; but on the day when he quitted his city, a rain of fire overwhelmed his incredulous fellow-citizens. So will it be with the Christian world at the coming of Christ: "their hearts will be overcharged with the cares of this life, with surfeiting, and with drunkenness." Some will be at the gaming-table; some, in the acts of cheating and swearing; some, lying drunk upon the earth, in a condition worse than that of the beasts.

4. The execution of vengeance is the last thing mentioned, in respect of the Evil Servant; "He shall *cut him asunder*, and appoint him his portion with *unbelievers*: there shall be *weeping* and *gnashing of teeth*." The place of his punishment, and the punishment itself, are suited to the nature of the crime. Where ought he who has not observed his baptismal vow, to have a portion but with *hypocrites*? His being *cut asunder* signifies his eternal separation from the presence of his Lord, and from the glory of his power. The *weeping* is a recompense for all his profane mirth. The *gnashing* of teeth with anguish and torment, is the just reward of gluttony and drunkenness.

The parable suggests the following inferences.

1. It is the interest of every Christian to guard against the

poison of *unbelief*. To allow the facts of Christianity is not properly faith, unless it influences the heart. Let us examine ourselves, whether our faith is so strong and operative, as to lessen our esteem for the world, and to augment our *wishes* for the coming of our Master. The evil servant had just so much thought as to talk about his lord, but not enough to expect him, and cheerfully prepare for his reception. As unbelief betrays a man into carelessness and pleasure, so will a right faith be sure to operate with a contrary effect, and make him sober and vigilant. And surely gratitude as well as prudence might render us watchful for the advent of Him who, for our salvation, watched many painful hours and days; and at last paid the price of our redemption with his own blood.

2. As the return of Christ to judgment is reserved for the world in general, and will come unexpectedly; so death is an unknown period, reserved for each of us individually and may surprise us unprepared. To presume upon youth or health is the worst of vanity and folly; as daily experience too frequently teaches us. Blessed, on the other hand, are the servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching: he shall make them sit down to meat, and wait upon them. Temperance and vigilance, for the Lord's sake, shall end in a perpetual feast. If the servant of the Lord can but refrain from eating and drinking with the drunken, he shall be rewarded with better fare and better company, when he shall partake of the marriage-supper of the Lamb. (JONES.)

Unprofitable Servants. LUKE, xvii. 7-10.

BUT be not elated by the gift and effects of faith by my co-operating power: for *which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding his flock, will say to him when he is come in from the field, 'Come immediately and recline at table with me:.'* or will he not rather say to him, '*Make ready something for my supper, and gird thyself and wait upon me, till I shall have eaten and drunken; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink:.'*' 9, *Does he think himself obliged to that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow [think] not.* 10. *So likewise when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded*

you, say, 'We are useless and unmeritorious servants; we have not conferred a benefit: we have only done that which was our duty to do; and what masters may expect from faithful servants.'

IN the preceding verse, our Lord had assured the disciples that if, in the discharge of their ministry, they were summoned to encounter, for his honour, any peculiar difficulty, they would be enabled to surmount it, by having an inward faith in his co-operation. But this vigorous faith, manifested in miraculous results, was not to inflate them with an idea of their own self-sufficiency, but must have humility as handmaid. They were but *servants* of Christ their Master. The allusion would convey a still greater force in reference to the ancient condition of slaves, who, though toiling from morning to night, and proceeding from one act of service to another, did but discharge their mere and allotted duty; and, therefore, could not claim any reward from their master, on the ground of conferring any special obligation. But a far greater claim has Christ over his servants, redeemed and purchased by his meritorious blood, above any that can be urged by an earthly master over an earthly servant. To these does Christ say, 'When ye shall have done *all* those things which are commanded you, say we are useless servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.' But if such must be our language, when we have done *all*; how far deeper must be our self-abasement, when our consciences bear witness that so far from having done all that was commanded, they have, in innumerable instances, grievously failed; and come short of their duty, which they might and ought to have observed.

To the latter words of our Lord, our Church alludes in her fourteenth article of religion, which declares her decision relative to works of supererogation.

The precepts contained in the Gospel for the regulation of our lives, are so full and comprehensive, that they include every good work which men are capable of performing. It is impossible to imagine any action acceptable to God, which does not fall within the precepts, "to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves;" and to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And besides these general precepts, there are

particular ones directed to persons in every condition and relation of life ; and extending to every point and circumstance which can possibly promote the honour of God, contribute to the happiness of our fellow-creatures, or tend to purify our own minds : and all these things are enjoined as duties of perfect and universal obligation ; as indispensably necessary wherever they are practicable. Since, therefore, God requires from us the entire exertion of all our powers, and not a single good action can be specified, which is not commanded in the New Testament ; it follows (in the words of the Article) that no room is left for "voluntary works, besides, over and above, God's commandments, which are called 'works of supererogation ;'" nor can such works be "taught without arrogance and impiety ;" since they imply a degree of merit, which man, in his present imperfect and corrupt state, is incapable of attaining ; and are directly opposite to the plain and infallible word of God ; or, (as the Article expresses it) "for by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do ; but that they do more for his sake, than of bounden duty is required : whereas Christ saith plainly, *When ye have done all that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.*" (BURNET.)

All the rules, prescribed in Scripture for our conduct, are given in the form of positive commands as absolutely necessary, wherever they are applicable to the attainment of eternal life ; and the violation of every one of these commands is declared to be sin. We are ordered to be "perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven, is perfect : " and so far from being able to exceed what is required for our salvation, the Gospel assures us, that after our utmost care and best endeavours, we shall still fall short of our whole duty ; and that our deficiencies must be supplied by the abundant merits of our blessed Redeemer. We are directed to trust to the mercy of God, and to the mediation of Christ : and to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling ;" that is, with anxiety lest we should not fulfil the conditions upon which it is offered. (TOMLINE.)

When all that we can do, is our mere duty, there can be no merit : for how can we deserve reward by doing that, which if we did not do, we should commit sin ? But all, nay more than all, that we can do, is most justly due to God, by the right of creation and of redemption, by the demands of the law, and the

precepts of the Gospel. How, then, can we deserve anything at God's hands? True it is, that God graciously accepts, and bountifully recompenses, the good works of his servants; but this he does out of regard, not to their intrinsic value, but to the riches of his mercy, and the fidelity of his promise. Every passage of Holy Scripture, which attributes our salvation to the mercy and grace of God, rather say the whole of the Gospel, which proceeds upon the notion of "eternal life being the gift of God," supports the doctrine of the Church of England in this respect, and shows the folly and absurdity, the arrogance and impiety, of the Church of Rome. (MANT.)

The practical conclusion of this doctrine is, to aspire to righteousness and true holiness, with all our might, and not to be proud of it, when we have done. Let us think it worthless in the sight of God, and infinitely below his acceptance, were it not for the merits of Christ. But still remember, that it is as much worth to us as heaven is worth; because without such holiness, no man shall see the Lord. We must, therefore, be as ambitious of leading a good life, as if we were sure even to merit by it: at the same time, we must be as humble before God, as St. Paul was, who besides keeping the faith, after he had done perhaps more in the way of good works than any mere man had done before him, yet summed up his own life and character in a very few and very humbling words, that *he was nothing*. He remembered that *God was all*; in whom we live, and move, and have our being. (WATERLAND.)

Our Lord claims to himself the title of THE GOOD SHEPHERD. JOHN, x. 1-16.

1. VERILY, verily, I say unto you, *He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up to enter by some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* [Whoever assumes the office of pastor of God's Church, without his appointment, is a robber of God.]

2. *But he that entereth-in by the door* and acts by divine commission, *is the shepherd of the sheep.* 3. *To him the door-keeper openeth*; [God the guardian of the Church, admits those who come by the appointed way,] *and the sheep attend to his voice; and such is his intimate knowledge of his flock, that he calleth*

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his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out to pasture. 4. And when he thus putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. 5. But a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. [The good pastor exhibits an example, which his disciples follow, to the neglect of every false teacher.]

6. Jesus spake unto them in this parabolic way in stating the difference between true and false teachers: but they [the Pharisees] understood not what things they were, which he spake unto them. 7. Then said Jesus again unto them by way of explanation, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the Door into the fold of the sheep; the only lawful way into the Church and ministry of the Gospel. 8. All that ever came before me, but have not entered by the door, as the Scribes and Pharisees, teachers of religion without commission, are spiritual thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not attend to them, and regard their doctrines. 9. I alone am the true Door of God's Church: by me if any enter with faith, he shall be saved from spiritual foes: and shall go in and out, unmolested and prosperous; and shall find pasture and vital nourishment for his soul.

10. The thief, the false teacher, cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy the sheep: the false teacher, if he can gratify his own interests, cares not what injury he may inflict. I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly, beyond any other dispensation.

11. I am THE GOOD SHEPHERD, the shepherd promised by the prophets. (Is. x. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23.) The Good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep, in defending them against beasts of prey: 12, whereas he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the enemy, fierce as a wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf seizeth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13. Now the hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14. I am THE GOOD SHEPHERD: and know and regard my sheep; and am known and regarded by my sheep (15, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father); and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold of the Jewish Church: them also must I bring; and they will listen to my voice: and there shall be one flock, and one

shepherd, even one Church for Jew and Gentile under my government, as the universal Pastor.

The sight of the sheep, exposed for sale, in the outer-court of the Temple, for sacrifice, may have given occasion to the preceding parable.

In this parable or *allegory*, minute resemblances are of less note than the general purpose. Our Saviour is sometimes the *door*; sometimes the *shepherd*. The *false shepherd* denotes the *Pharisees*, who had usurped, from the Priests, the office of national instructors. The *fold* is the kingdom of heaven, or the Church militant on earth, in an enlarged sense; and sometimes the Jewish Church.

It seems customary for the Jewish shepherds to give names to their sheep (v. 3), as we do to dogs and horses. The shepherd preceded his sheep (v. 4); which, on hearing his voice, or sound of his horn, immediately gathered round him. (T. H. HORNE, vol. iii. p. 448.)

THE title of *The Good Shepherd* which our Lord assumes, does not imply anything mean or offensive. It is a title often applied to kings and rulers. To the Jews, as a pastoral people, the term would convey no other than pleasing ideas. In their national history, they would remember that Moses fed the flocks of Jethro; and that David exchanged his crook for a sceptre. It was not profane in the Psalmist to address Jehovah as “the *Shepherd* of Israel;” nor in the prophet, to describe the promised Messiah as one who “would feed his flock like a *shepherd*.”

The kings and princes of the heathen, instead of protecting those who were committed to their government, as the first shepherds of the world had done their families,—led them forth not as sheep to their pasture, but as sheep to the slaughter; and plunged them, without reason, into all the miseries of ambitious wars. The heathen priests led the people far from a righteous service, into the most absurd idolatry, and into the most debasing immorality of conduct. The professors of philosophy scrupled not to sanction many gross enormities. The teachers of the Jewish people fed them with empty fancies, silly

fables, and excuses for evasion of vital duty. The Pharisees despised the people. The Scribes entangled them in their disputes. The Sadducees seduced them into heresy. So true were our Lord's words, when he viewed the multitude which had gathered around him: "he had compassion on them; because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd."

Nor can there be a more expressive emblem, than *sheep without a shepherd*, of the human race, previously to the coming of the promised guide. Sheep have neither the swiftness, strength, nor cunning, which distinguish other creatures: they possess neither the means of defence nor the resources, which belong to almost every other animal.

This emblem of our common condition should remind us of our natural insufficiency in that state of forfeiture and frailty, in which we had remained, if the gracious purpose of the Lord had not been fulfilled in our behalf. The offices of shepherd were discharged by him in a great variety of manners.

If the name of *shepherd*, though borne by distinguished persons, carries in it some stamp of humility; it is the more applicable to him who veiled his divine nature in the garb of a pastor of a little flock. The same description, as it indicates simplicity of manners, well suits the meek and lowly Jesus.

It was foretold of Christ that he should lead his flock to fertile pastures. He fulfilled this prediction, when he instructed his people in the wholesome lessons of eternal life; when he opened the font of baptism, (not as Abraham, his wells for his own family) for all succeeding generations; and administered spiritual food to *all* who hunger after righteousness.

If one office of the Good Shepherd be to protect the fold against the assault of ravenous beasts, similar is the guardian care which Christ exerts over his Church. The wild boar out of the forest has not yet rooted it up; it is founded upon a rock. His words of encouragement are, *Fear not, little flock*.

The Good Shepherd *calleth his sheep by name*. Equally intimate and extensive is the knowledge, which Christ possesses of the humblest member of his Church. It has been said of some celebrated general, that in the most numerous army, each soldier was known to him personally. In whatever region of the earth, two or three of the flock have been gathered together in the name of the one Great Shepherd, there is he in the midst of them.

The sheep *hear the voice* of the Good Shepherd. In season, out of season, Christ admonishes, instructs, exhorts. In the hour of dangerous wandering, his friendly voice is distinctly heard, to reclaim from the maze of error.

The Good Shepherd *goeth before his sheep*. It is one great peculiarity of Christ, as a public teacher, that his life and doctrine are not contradictory to each other: so that, whether we obey his precepts or imitate his example, we are equally advanced in our progress towards heaven.

It was predicted of the same Redeemer, under the figure of *The Good Shepherd*, that he should seek the wanderer, and bring back that which was lost. This he fulfilled when he reclaimed men from their sins, and withdrew them from the miseries of blind and guilty courses. It was said concerning him, that he should *take the feeble in his bosom*. He fulfilled this when he used forbearance with the doubtful and weak-hearted, and did not burden them with things too heavy for them to endure; but waited patiently for their increase in faith and knowledge; supporting them through all the stages of their growth in grace. He fulfilled this when he led them on by easy steps; as Jacob travelled slowly with his flock and his little ones.

Our blessed Lord who discharges in our behalf these numerous offices of love, may well claim the title of *The Good Shepherd*. Let us humbly commit our souls to him, as ever we desire they should be safe and happy. If we are really members of his flock, we shall labour to maintain the bond of communion as belonging to one fold; to evince a meekness of soul; to return penitently to the fold, if we have wandered from its holy precincts; and to close our ears to false pastors, who would lure us into ruinous doctrine. We shall maintain the most cheerful confidence in his superintending care, who maketh us to lie down in green pastures, and whose rod and staff comfort us. The greater will be our love and gratitude, inasmuch as we were not originally of this fold, but have been brought in by his gratuitous mercy. In this spirit of gratitude we shall pray the more earnestly, that the boundaries of his fold may be still more extended, and the whole number of his elect accomplished; that all the flock may, at length, appear together; and may be conducted by him to the regions of that immortal life which he

determines to give it. (JOSEPH HOLDEN POTT,* M.A., Arch-deacon of Middlesex; and, during seventeen years, Vicar of Kensington.)

* This reference to the writings of Arch-deacon POTT reminds me of a gentleman, in whom were united a conciliatory urbanity of manner; sound theological erudition; an amiable simplicity of mind; unaffected humility of deportment; an unostentatious liberality in alms-giving; and a benevolence purely evangelical in thought and conduct. The tablet erected in Kensington Church, in affectionate reverence of his memory, contains not exaggerated praise, in recording him as "*exemplifying in his guileless life, the lessons which he taught; earnest in defending by his writings, the cause of Christian truth; instant in the work, even till his last days; in charity, never failing; in zeal, abundant. While yet vigorous in mind, but conscious of advancing infirmities, he resigned his pastoral charge, in 1842. He was called to his rest, Feb. 17, 1847: in the 89th year of his age.*" I gratefully esteem it a signal honour to have been appointed by SUCH a man, without any claim or solicitation, to the Perpetual Curacy of the District-Church of St. Barnabas, Kensington.

Our Lord, on his road to Jerusalem, delivers the parable of the ten Minas: LUKE, xix. 11-27.

The Prince Messiah, departing from earth, after his meritorious sufferings, to the far country of heaven, in order to procure the full possession of his spiritual and mediatorial kingdom,—to his household servants, to all his professed disciples, committed a sum of money to be placed out at interest; spiritual gifts as means of promoting his glory. His general citizens, the perverse Jews and infidel nations, exert a causeless opposition against divine truth. On his return, after investiture, at the day of judgment, he rewards his disciples according to their respective labours: but those who were actively opposed to him, he puts to death: Jerusalem is destroyed, as a type of the punishment which awaits all enemies of the Gospel, in the final day of retribution. Our Lord's hearers were thus apprised, that his kingdom was not of this world.

LUKE, xix. 11. JESUS, in the preceding verse, had spoken of himself as 'a Saviour.' *And as they* [the guests of Zaccheus] *were hearing these things, he continued his discourse in a parable, because he was now nigh to Jerusalem; and because they thought that the kingdom of God would be immediately revealed among them; and that he, as the Messiah, would assume the character of a triumphant monarch.* 12. *He said therefore, A certain person,*

of noble birth, went into a distant country, to procure for himself royalty, and to return to his country.

13. *And he called ten of his household servants, and delivered to them ten minas, one to each servant, and said unto them, 'Trade with this till I come back.'* 14. *But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, 'We are unwilling that this man should be made our king.'*

15. *And it came to pass, that when he had received the royal title, and was come back with full regal power, he then commanded these his household-servants to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.*

16, 17. *And the first servant came and said, 'Sir, thy mina hath gained-moreover in trade ten minas.' And his lord said to him, 'Well done, thou good servant: since thou hast been faithful in a very little, know that thou hast authority over ten cities.'*

18. *And the second came and said, 'Sir, thy mina hath made [or gained] five minas.'* 19. *And the lord said likewise unto this man, 'Be thou also in authority over five cities.'*

20. *And another servant came and said, 'Sir, behold, here is thy mina, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.'* 21. *For I feared thee, because I know that thou art a harsh [or griping] man; who takest up from the ground what thou didst not deposit; and one who reapest what thou didst not sow.*

22, 23. *But his lord saith to him, 'Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, O thou wicked servant! Thou knewest that I am a harsh [or griping] man, taking up what I did not deposit, and reaping what I did not sow. And why, then, didst thou not give my money into the bank [table of the money-changers] that at my return, I might have exacted it with common interest?'*

24. *And he said to them that stood by, 'Take away the mina from him, and give it to him that hath the ten—(25, and in surprise they said unto him, 'Sir, he hath already ten minas,')—26, for I say to you that to every one who really hath by improving what he hath, shall be given; but from him who virtually hath not by neglecting to improve his possessions, even that which he really hath, shall be taken away.'* 27. *But as for those mine enemies, those who were not willing that I should be king over them, bring them hither, and slaughter them in my presence.*

v. 12 : Most of the kings of the East, in those times, were vassals to the Romans : so that the next heir seldom ventured to ascend the vacant throne, without their permission, and, often, without travelling to Rome to procure it. It was common for ambassadors to be sent to Rome, by cities and states, to oppose such as sought there to be appointed king over them. (SCOTT.)

v. 13 : A mina was equivalent to 3*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*

v. 21 : "To take up what we lay not down" is a proverbial expression applied to such as furtively appropriate to themselves whatever they find (as money dropped in the street) without making any enquiry after the true owner. Against this dishonest conduct, Solon enacted an express law.

IN this parable, Jesus taught his disciples, that though they might imagine his kingdom was speedily to be erected, and that they were soon to partake of its joys,—he was to go away or die, before he obtained it ; and that they were to perform a long course of laborious services, before they received their reward. That having obtained the kingdom at his resurrection, he would return, and reckon with his servants, to whom he had given ability and opportunity for his work ; and would treat them according to the fidelity they showed in the trust committed unto them. Particularly, that he would execute vengeance on those who, for his conversing familiarly with sinners, or for the difficulty or disagreeableness of his laws, or for any other cause whatever, had refused to let him reign over them, or hindered the erection of his kingdom among others. This Jesus did in some measure, when he destroyed the Jewish nation by the Roman armies ; and still continues to do by the extraordinary judgments, with which he sometimes visits mankind. But he will do it more eminently at the end of the world, when he shall come with millions of Angels, finally to reward his faithful servants, and to punish his enemies. The kingdom of Christ, spoken of in the Parable, is his Mediatorial Kingdom, in which he rules men by his word and spirit ; and exercises the highest acts of kingly power ; calls all his subjects, without distinction, to his tribunal ; judges them ; and rewards or punishes them, according as he knows they deserve.

They who affix a more general meaning to this Parable,

suppose that the character and end of *three sorts of persons* are described in it. First, the character of those who profess themselves the servants of Christ, and who act in a manner suitable to their profession.

Secondly, the character of those, who take on them the title, but do not act up to it.

Thirdly, the character of those, who, though they be Christ's natural subjects, neither profess themselves his servants, nor yield him obedience; but endeavour to shake off his yoke, and oppose him with all their might.

The first sort are the true disciples of Christ. The second sort are hypocrites. The third are the openly profane.

The treatment which the servants in the Parable met with from their Lord, represents the judgment and end of the different sorts of Christians, just now mentioned. True disciples shall be munificently rewarded with the honours and pleasures of immortality; hypocrites shall be spoiled of all the advantages on which they relied, and stripped of those false virtues for which they valued themselves; so that being showed to all the world in their proper colours, their pride shall be utterly mortified, and they themselves loaded with eternal infamy. Lastly, the detection and punishment of hypocrites shall add to the honours of the truly virtuous, whose merits shall thus shine more conspicuously: for as the houses and lands which our Lord promised to his followers (Mark, x. 30) signify not the things themselves, but the satisfaction arising from them; so the pound in the Parable, given to him who had ten pounds, signifies that persons in heaven shall have satisfaction as great as those which hypocrites enjoy in their advantages and supposed virtues, but upon a more solid foundation, namely, the consciousness of real virtues, and the continual increase of grace. Thus shall the men who possess true goodness, be rewarded. Having in their own eyes, always appeared as nothing, they shall, by the approbation of God, be raised to a becoming sense of the excellent qualities by which they are adorned; and having been sorely distressed with the motions of sin, while they constantly struggled against them, they shall now be made more than conquerors, and have infinite satisfaction in the victory. Thus shall we be animated to diligence in God's service: for proportionable to that diligence will be our reward. Let us remem-

ber we labour for ourselves while we labour for him ; as all the progress we make in wisdom and in goodness renders our own souls so much the happier, and will render them so to all eternity. Blessed servants that have the applause of such a Master, and share a reward as liberal as that conferred on a faithful steward, who should be made governor of a province containing ten cities. Let us, therefore, beware of a slothful neglect of our stock ; and of those hard thoughts of God which would discourage us from pursuing his service.

As for the open enemies of Jesus, they shall be punished with exemplary punishment, severe in proportion to the degree of their guilt. Let us, therefore, take heed that we do not proudly and insolently reject the government of his anointed Son, and either say with our tongues, or declare by our actions, *We will not have this man to reign over us* ; for if we do, we speak a word against our own lives. He will be glorified by us, or upon us. If in that dreadful day, he should bring us forth as the helpless prisoners of his justice, and command us to be slain in his presence ; how can we withstand his power ? or to the horns of what altar shall we flee for sanctuary ? “ O Lord, our flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and we are afraid of thy judgments.” (Psalm cxix. 120.) May we never be the miserable objects of them ; but having faithfully served thee here, may that be to us a day of honour, reward, and triumph, which shall be, to every presumptuous rebel, a day of shame and terror, of dreadful execution and eternal destruction ! (MAC-KNIGHT. DODDRIDGE.)

Jesus dines at the house of Simon a Pharisee. A Gentile woman, who through the ministry of Christ had been converted, comes to give public testimony of her gratitude to her gracious deliverer from the darkness and guilt of sin. LUKE, vii. 36-50.

36. *AND one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him : and he went into the house of the Pharisee, and reclined at table.*

37. *And, behold, a woman of that city who was a heathen, when she knew that Jesus was reclining at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster vase full of perfumed ointment ; 38, and standing at the back of our Lord's couch, at his feet, weep-*

ing, she began to water his feet with her tears; and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and tenderly-kissed his feet, and anointed them with the perfumed-ointment.

39. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him, observed this, he spake within himself, saying, *This man, if he were a divinely-inspired person, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a heathen.*

40. And Jesus, in reply to sentiments which he read in Simon's heart, said unto him, '*Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.*' And he saith, '*O teacher, say it freely.*'

41. '*A certain lender of money had two debtors; one owed him five hundred denarii; and the other, fifty: 42, but as they were unable to pay, he benevolently-forgave them both. Say then, which of them would love him the more intensely?*' 43. And Simon answered and said, '*I suppose that he to whom he benevolently-forgave the more.*' And Jesus said to him, '*Thou hast judged rightly.*'

44. And turning himself to the woman, he said to Simon, '*Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house an invited guest: and (omitting all customary attentions) thou didst not give me water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou didst not give to me the usual respect of a kiss: but this woman, from the hour of her entrance, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. Thou didst not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed even my feet with perfumed-unguent. 47. Wherefore, on the occasion of her late demeanour, I declare to thee, that so far from polluting me with her touch, she hath received from me forgiveness of her numerous sins: therefore, her love is great: and by her tears of gratitude, reverent homage, and costly devotion, she labours to evidence the greatness of her love for having been brought by me to repentance, and thereby to faith and pardon. These signal mercies have awakened within her this intense affection: whereas to whom little is forgiven, and who considers the remitted debt to be inconsiderable, the same loveth his benefactor but little.*

48. And to renew the kind assurance of the pardon formerly granted, he turned to the woman, and said to her, *I know the sincerity of thy repentance; and for thy encouragement under*

this contempt, I solemnly declare that *thy sins have been forgiven*.

49. *And they who reclined at table with Jesus, began to say [said] within themselves, 'Who is this that not only allows the touch of a heathen, but even forgiveth sins ?'* 50. *But far from noticing their uncharitable thoughts, he said to the woman, 'Thy faith hath saved thee from the punishment of sin : go thy way in peace.'*

Vv. 44-46 : On the arrival of visitors, water was brought to wash their feet, not only for refreshment after a sultry and dusty walk, but that the couches might not be soiled. The slaves took charge of the sandals. After ablution, the guests were anointed with oils or rich perfumes. The recumbent attitude allowed easy access to the feet of the guests. A kiss on the cheek was the mark of friendship ; on the hand or foot, of homage and humility.

As there does not appear any valid reason for supposing that the woman, mentioned in this parable, was a notorious harlot ; the original Greek word, here translated *sinner*, may be understood in its frequent acceptation of *heathen*, as opposed to *Israelite*. Without fixing upon the woman the particular crime of impurity, the parable may be considered as representing in her, a sample of that favour, likely to be extended to all sinners who resemble her in sincerity of contrition, and in affectionate devotion towards the great Evangelical Benefactor.

Thy faith hath saved thee. How joyful an assurance must this have been to the woman, to receive a confirmation of a former mercy, in hearing these gracious words from the mouth of the great Saviour, who alone had authority to pronounce them. But to suppose that the same rich invaluable blessing is not, at this time, vouchsafed to those who no less truly repent and unfeignedly believe in the Son of God,—is to suppose that in the lowest state of humiliation, in the days of his flesh, he distinguishes his disciples far beyond what he does now, when seated at the right hand of God. The same evidence, rational, not enthusiastic ; scriptural, not imaginary ; all real penitents

have to produce for the pardon of sins: for it is the same Lord who still speaketh to us from heaven. They will assuredly obtain pardon and grace, if they in earnest seek for it in prayer to Christ. When, therefore, we hear the tidings of pardon, let us gladly embrace it; acknowledging that not five hundred denarii, nor even ten thousand talents, are sufficient to express the greatness of our debt. To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. So long as we suppose our offences small, and our guilt trifling; the office of a Redeemer will seem a superfluous appointment. When we shall have confessed with unfeigned sorrow, that our debt of fifty denarii (supposing it no more) makes a divine surety absolutely necessary to discharge it; we shall retain the remembrance of the debt, even under the hope that God has forgiven it. We shall labour that the tenderness of our love, the warmth of our zeal, and the steadiness of our obedience, may, in some measure, be proportionable to it; and, blessed Saviour, how distinguished must they then be!

The condescension of Jesus, in graciously receiving from a former convert, these marks of grateful love, is contrasted with the contemptuous spirit of Simon; who, at the sight of a heathen, was ready to exclaim, 'Begone; I am holier than thou.' By this self-conceit, he evidently discovered that he had no sense of his own imperfection, nor the least apprehension of his own demerit. May God preserve us from that arrogant confidence in our own righteousness; which, while it leads us to despise some, perhaps much dearer to him than ourselves, would proportionably sink our value of salvation; lessen our love to our Saviour; and prove what little heed we pay to his example. If Christ came to save sinners; and in reclaiming them, used all lenity and forbearance; shall we stand aloof; and discourage by upbraiding humble penitents with the scandals of their former life? Shall the sorrowful appearance, the tears, the humble conduct of the penitent, so far from attracting our attention and exciting our pity, only afford occasion for captious and ungenerous reflections? Rigid and unrelenting virtue, is this the lesson thou teachest thy votaries? No: the Christian heart is ever humane. At the sufferings of guilt, it softens and melts: but with the tears of honest sorrow and penitence, it mingles its own: and with the most attracting and endearing sympathy, soothes their pains, and mitigates their

anguish. Where we have reason to believe, that sin has been lamented and forsaken, and consequently that God has forgiven it, let us cheerfully receive those whom our holy Master has not rejected. And if the remembrance of former irregularities cannot be entirely lost, let it only engage us to magnify the riches of divine grace towards such persons, and to rejoice with them in the display of it. (DODDRIDGE. SCOTT.)

Christ exhorts his disciples to watchfulness and fidelity, in reference to his sudden coming to final judgment. LUKE, xii. 35-46.

35. *Let your loins be girded round with your garments in a readiness for activity, and your lamps burning; 36, and ye yourselves like unto men-servants who are waiting for their lord's return from a marriage-feast; that when he comes and has knocked, they may immediately open to him, and not be surprised in disorder. 37. Happy are the servants whom, when their lord cometh, he shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you, That he will condescend to gird himself, and cause them to recline to supper, and will come and wait upon them. 38. And whether he come early in the second watch, or come late in the third watch of the night, and find them thus employed, happy are those servants! 39. And ye know this, that if the master had been aware at what hour the thief would have come; he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be dug-through. 40. Be ye, therefore, also ready: for at such a season as ye think not, the Son-of-Man cometh.*

41. *Peter then said unto him, 'Lord, dost thou speak this parable unto us the apostles; or also unto all in general?'*

42. *And the Lord said, 'Though all may be interested in this warning, yet it may be especially applied to my more immediate ministers. Who now, of what character and disposition, ought to be that faithful and prudent steward, whom his lord shall set over all the servants of his family, even as I commit to you the care of the Church, to measure out to them, at the set time, the stated allowance of food? 43. Happy is that servant [or steward] whom his lord when he cometh, shall find so doing! 44. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him to the management of his whole estate.'*

45. *But if that servant should say in his heart, 'My lord delays;' and shall begin to beat [shall beat] the men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, behaving tyrannically, and giving himself up to gluttony and drunkenness, 46, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware; and will cut him asunder with severe scourging, and appoint him his portion with those who are unworthy to be trusted.*

THE obvious design of this Parable is to excite us to a serious preparation for the awful solemnities of death and judgment. We are here admonished to consider ourselves as servants who have a Master in heaven, of whose return we have the strongest assurance. But as we are utterly ignorant of the precise time of his coming, it is the more important to bear carefully in mind the duties which we owe to him in his absence.

1. We are plainly taught that we should lay aside every thing that may encumber us in the service of our Master: *let your loins be girded about.* To the same purpose, St. Peter exhorts us, *Gird up the loins of your mind.* The New Testament abounds with many exhortations of the same kind; which will appear to have a peculiar propriety, if we consider those figurative representations of our work to which they are applied. It is called a *race*; a *strife*; a *warfare*. We must run, and wrestle, and fight: and, therefore, have need of all our strength and activity. Long garments are for ornament, but not for use: it was usual to tuck them up and gird them round the loins, whenever exertion, speed, agility, or waiting at table, was required. In the same spirit, we must labour to get rid of every incumbrance, and to be always in a posture for active service. With a cautious sense of duty, the Christian servant sits, with a burning lamp, ready to open the door at any hour, and to light his returning Master to his chamber. Nor is our own vigilance sufficient: we must implore the divine aid. Satan desires to sift us as wheat. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

2. Our Saviour intimates, that another part of our preparation consists in the performance of the duties we owe to each other, as well as those which more immediately respect himself. The servant who, careless of his Lord's coming, shall treat with

violence and injustice his fellow-servants, will meet with some punishment extraordinarily severe. Social duties have a high rank in our Gospel-obligations : and " this commandment have we received, that he who loveth God, love his neighbour also."

1. The necessity of preparation for our Lord's return, may be urged from the certainty of it. With these very eyes, we shall see our Redeemer. How shall we look him in the face, if, during his absence, we have eaten and drank, in a spirit of worldly sensuality ? One great test of fidelity is to regard the Master's interests and commands, when he is at a distance ; more especially of a Master who hath redeemed us from slavery with his own precious blood.

2. The *uncertainty of the precise time* of his coming should excite us to be in a fit posture to receive him. Christ often compares his coming to that of a thief in the night, who gives not previous notice. He likens himself (v. 36) to one who is attending a marriage solemnity : because, on such occasions, people are not usually masters of their own time ; and, consequently, their return to their homes is more uncertain. How then, O man, dost thou know, but that to-morrow thy Master may come to thee ? or may summon thee to him ? Show thy security for one day : and then claim that day as thine own : but if thou canst not, how mad art thou to leave thy task unfinished ! Are not so many sudden deaths sufficient to convince us of the folly of depending upon life, and assuring ourselves of one single moment ; though Christ had not given us any warning against it ? No state, no condition, is excused from watching : because death is the punishment of all : and it is nature which is condemned to death. There is no safer way we can take, than to count ourselves in the number of those who are to be surprised : the only reason why so many fall into this misfortune, is, because they flatter themselves they shall not.

3. Preparation may be too late. When the Master shall have returned, working time is over. He comes to judge us according to what we have done, and not to call us to perfect unfinished labours. We are now sowing the seed for eternity : and what we sow, that shall we reap.

4. A powerful motive of preparation for our Master's coming may be derived from the glorious reward of watchful servants : *He shall gird himself, and cause them to recline at*

table, and will come forth, and wait upon them. Surely, this is a reward, not of debt, but of grace: how can the most perfect obedience merit anything like this? The words cannot be literally fulfilled: but they imply some extraordinary marks of respect which Christ will bestow upon his faithful servants. "If any man serve me; where I am, there shall my servant be." Our Master is now absent: but he will come again, and receive us unto himself. Blessed, therefore, are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching! (WALKER, of Edinburgh.)

Our Lord, at Capernaum, delivers the parable of the Relapsed Demoniac. MATTHEW, xii. 43-45; LUKE, xi. 24-26.

43. *BUT when the unclean spirit hath gone out of a man, he traverses parched and desert regions, seeking a place of rest, but findeth not. Then he saith, 'I will return to my dwelling, whence I came out;' and when he cometh, he findeth it unoccupied, swept, and set in order. Then he goeth, and taketh with him as companions seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter and dwell there: so that the last state of that man is worse than the former. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

IN this scripture, our Lord describes the danger of the unbelieving Jews, under a parable formed on the case of a demoniac. An evil spirit, called *unclean*, since all sin is uncleanness before a holy God,—is here supposed to quit reluctantly a possessed victim, lest he should be violently expelled. As he cannot obtain permission to possess any other person, he wanders about disconsolate, in dry or *desert* places which (in the notions of the Jews) demons were supposed to haunt. But finding no place of rest, he at length attempts to regain possession of him from whom he had departed. On his return, he finds his former dwelling empty; without any possessor to oppose his entrance; even swept and garnished, as if ready prepared for his reception. On this discovery, he hastens and fetches *seven* other evil spirits more malignant than himself: they take up their abode in that man; and the possession becomes more dreadful and incurable

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than ever. The number *seven* denotes a large and complete, yet uncertain and indefinite number.

Our Lord declares, that the case would be similar with that generation. Though, by the preaching of Christ and his disciples, the powers of darkness had been expelled from many, yet Satan finding the Jewish nation, by their prodigious wickedness and incredulity, still more than ever prepared to receive him, would resume his influence; and render the Jews more incredulous, obdurate, and blasphemous than before.

This passage, applied more immediately to ourselves, conveys an awful warning, That although the house of our conscience be once made clean, and the evil spirit be expelled from us by baptism or repentance; yet, by our indolence and carelessness, he may return with many worse spirits; and render our condition more desperate than before.

The aggravation of a relapse in sin consists, partly, in the *infatuation*; partly, in the *ingratitude*, of such conduct.

1. The language of the Tempter, in offering forbidden fruit, is nearly the same in all ages: 'Ye shall not surely die.' But is it not matter of astonishment, that when we have experienced the promised fruit to be nothing but ashes and wormwood, we should again and again be duped by his fallacious promises; and not rather remember the assurance of an Apostle, that 'the wages of sin is death.' If we had drained a poisoned bowl, believing it to be a salutary beverage; should we, upon unexpected recovery, incur knowingly a similar danger? If a mariner be rescued from shipwreck; does he instantly precipitate himself into the stormy ocean from which he has been with difficulty plucked? And yet how feebly do these images illustrate the madness of those transgressors, who again taste the cup of sin; who again plunge into the tide of corruption! *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; and be horribly afraid: for my people hath forsaken me, the fountain of living waters: and hewed them out cisterns that can hold no water.*

2. A relapse in sin is horrible *ingratitude*. We were the children of wrath: we had merited an infinite malediction: we had reason to expect the execution of the sentence, 'Cursed be he that continueth not in all the words of this law, to do them:' and yet, in that season of despair, in that state of sinfulness, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is this God of the Gospel who has pardoned us not seven times, but seventy times seven : and where he had forgiven much, might have expected much love. What *ingratitude*, therefore, is comprised in continued relapses !

To those who sin wilfully, after that they have received the knowledge of the truth, 'there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' (Heb. x. 26.) The quiver of an angry God is full of piercing arrows : but it may suffice to illustrate the danger of a relapse in sin, by this one consideration,—the wilful sinner dies in a state of impenitence.

The divine mercy has its limits. The day of vengeance must succeed the season of neglected grace. The candlestick of God is taken from the sinner, that it may be bestowed on such as labour to cast-off the works of darkness, and walk as children of light. The vine is no longer nourished by the dews of a favouring heaven. The barren fig-tree is no longer permitted to encumber the ground. If we read attentively the histories of a Pharaoh, a Saul, a Judas ; they will enable us to appreciate this desertion on the part of God. If the soul, once purified, be again wilfully abandoned to its former pollutions ; the expelled spirit takes to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself. A sinner, thus estranged, what is he but Samson, when the Spirit of the Lord had gone from him ? This terror of the Philistines becomes their mockery : he is bound with fetters of brass : his eyes are put out ; and he is condemned to servile drudgery. It is thus that the mind becomes blinded. All light is extinguished ; and the slave becomes the sport of a more than Egyptian task-master. We not only lose our horror of sin, but we become familiarized. *The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach ; and they have no delight in it.* There was a time when the heart was accessible to the workings of contrition ; but now if God smites, we say, *They have stricken me ; and I felt it not.* The profane swearer multiplies his oaths without consciousness of his crime. The drunkard recounts his sinful excesses, as an idle frolic. In this brutal insensibility, arising from habits long indulged, years speedon their course ; death approaches ; and we expire in final

impenitence. The mind, the spirit, the imagination of sinners, have all become depraved; and *the end* (says St. Paul) *shall be according to their works*. The threat of Jesus Christ is literally fulfilled, *Ye shall die in your sins*.

Let us to whom the revelation of the Gospel is so clearly made, fear lest these dreadful things should come upon us; and the abuse of our advantages should render us an easy prey to Satan, and a fit habitation for the powers of darkness. Let those particularly feel it, who, having been brought to some serious impressions and some external reformation, are tempted to relapse into former vices, which would render their latter end far worse than their beginning. God has permitted some such awful instances to occur: and unhappy wretches, perhaps some of them the children of religious parents too, who were once not far from the kingdom of God, have so abandoned every principle of religion, and every sentiment of wisdom and virtue, that it seems as if seven demons had possessed them, and were driving them headlong to destruction.

Necessity of inward purity: MATTHEW, xv. 10-20; MARK, vii. 14-23.

Matt. 10, 11; Mark, 14-16. AND when he had called all the multitude, there present, unto him, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one of you and mind what I say. There is nothing from without a man, which as meat or drink entering into him, can really defile him in the sight of God: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth the man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.

[Our Lord did not mean to overthrow the distinction which the Law had established between things clean and unclean, in the matter of man's food. That distinction, like all the other emblematical institutions of Moses, was wisely appointed; being designed to teach the Israelites how carefully the familiar company and conversation of the wicked is to be avoided. He only affirmed that in itself no kind of food can defile the *mind* which is *the man*, though by accident it may: for instance, when taken in quantity or kind contrary to the commandment of God.]

Matt. 12; Mark, 17. And when he was entered into the house from the multitude, then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this doctrine relative to their traditions?

Matt. 13-15: But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. [The unfounded traditions and false doctrines, (which, as so many seeds, the Pharisees have sown in the field of their followers' minds) must be rooted up, like weeds, and make room for the plants of true religion.] Regard them not [the Pharisees] what they say or do against my doctrine: they and their disciples are under a cloud of mental darkness: they are blind leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the same ditch and pit of destruction.

Then Peter answered and said unto him, Explain unto us this parable [maxim] respecting pollution.

Matt. 16, 17; Mark, 18, 19. And Jesus said unto the disciples, Are ye also even yet without understanding? Do ye not still understand, that whatsoever thing, as food, from without entereth into the man, at the mouth, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth into the stomach, and is cast out into the sink, purifying, and fitting for nourishment, all the meats and food which remain in the body.

Matt. 17-20; Mark, 20-23. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man: for those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart; and they defile the man: for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil reasonings, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, false witness, insatiable desires, malevolent affections, deceit, lasciviousness, envy, calumny, pride, levity of mind; all these evil things come from within, and have the origin in the soul: and these are the things that defile the man: but to eat with unwashed hands, defileth not the man.

One great peculiarity of the morality of the New Testament is the stress, which is laid by our Saviour upon the regulation of the thoughts.

"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications," &c. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the

platter, but *within* they are full of extortion and excess. Ye are like unto whited sepulchres ; which indeed appear beautiful *outward* ; but are *within* full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness : even so ye also *outwardly* appear righteous unto men ; but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Who-soever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his *heart*."

There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind, but that the propensities of our nature must be subject to regulation : but the question is *where* the check ought to be placed, upon the thought ; or only upon the action. In this question, our Saviour has pronounced a decisive judgment. He makes the control of thought essential. Internal purity with him is every thing. In proving a point which depends upon experience, and upon the knowledge of the human constitution, there is no better method than to cite the judgment of persons who appear to have given great attention to the subject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, speaking of this very declaration of our Saviour, "Whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart,"—and, understanding it, as we do, to contain an injunction to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont to say, that "our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Haller, who has recorded this saying of Boerhaave, adds to it the following remarks of his own : "It did not escape the observation of our Saviour, that the rejection of any evil thoughts was the best defence against vice. For when a debauched person fills his imagination with impure pictures, the licentious ideas which he recalls, fail not to stimulate his desires with a degree of violence which he cannot resist. This will be followed by gratification, unless some external obstacle should prevent him from the commission of a sin, which he had internally resolved on. Every moment of time, which is spent in meditations upon sin, increases the power of the dangerous object, which has possessed our imagination." (PALEY.)

Salutary rules are not wanting for the regulation of our thoughts, which our Saviour has considered to be the true source of good or evil conduct.

I. Let us avoid idleness. The mind of man is busy and active. What a number of monstrous, giddy, frothy, revengeful,

ambitious, lustful conceits, seize upon the brain, for want of better employment. The field of Solomon's sluggard, overgrown with thorns and nettles, is a fit emblem of the field of the human mind, overgrown with sinful thoughts, for want of better cultivation. The idle mind is blank paper, upon which the enemy of souls may write whatever he pleases; it is the house swept and garnished for the reception of impure demons. It would be a hard case, if rational beings, as man, could not find in the pursuit of science useful or innocent, in the visible works of God, in the contemplation of his providence, in the wonders of his redeeming love,—some foundation for other thoughts, than what an idle, roving, and unbridled imagination will supply.

2. For the right government of thoughts most essential is a due regard of God's continual presence. Who of us will not confess, that if the workings of his mind were all known to his parents, his children, his neighbours, his friends, and his enemies, he would be as careful that his thoughts might appear as rational and virtuous, as he wishes his words and actions to seem? But shall we dread to have our childish, revengeful, and wanton thoughts to be exposed before mortals, and think it a matter of indifference that all the operations of our hearts are clearly beheld by the great God of heaven and earth; the God who will bring every secret thought into judgment? If we were really and deeply convinced, that God 'is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways;' we should labour to cherish no other thoughts than such as we should not wish to have inscribed on our foreheads.

3. This sense of God's presence will lead to another rule for the right government of our thoughts,—a spirit of prayer. If we have formed an attachment to a virtuous friend, we rejoice in his society, we seek his converse, we address him when absent, by many communications. These communications, in a spiritual sense, are prayers. The more frequently and the more fervently they are uttered, the more pure does the mind become by withdrawing our affections from earthly things, and fixing them on the mercy and power of a holy and spotless God. To neglect devotional intercourse will cause the world to absorb our thoughts; and from the world, they will be tainted; from the world, they will become sensual and

impure. On this important subject, our Church has suggested a most appropriate prayer: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the *thoughts* of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name; through Christ our "Lord." (CALAMY.)

Duties suited to strength. MATT. ix. 14-17; MARK, ii. 18-22; LUKE, v. 33-39.

Matt. 14; Mark, 18; Luke, 33. WHILE Jesus was seated at the publican's table, the disciples of John came and say unto him, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not, but eat and drink?

Matt. 15; Mark, 19, 20; Luke, 34, 35. And Jesus said unto them, Can the bridemen and guests of the bridegroom, who are the children of the nuptial-chamber, mourn and fast, while the bridegroom is yet with them? As long as they have the bridegroom among them, they cannot reasonably be expected to fast. But the days will arrive, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then shall they fast in those days.

Matt. 16; Mark, 21; Luke, 36. And, by way of illustration, Jesus spake also a parable to them, saying, No man will sew a patch of new cloth, undressed by the fuller, on an old garment: otherwise, both the new, being stronger, makes a rent; and the patch that was taken from the new, and put in to fill up the old, agrees not with the old in texture and colour; but pulls away a portion from the edges of the old; and the rent or hole is made worse.

Matt. 17; Mark, 22; Luke, 37, 38. And, on the same principle, no man puts new wine into old leathern-flasks: else, the fermentation of the new wine will burst the worn-out flasks; and so the wine will be spilt, as well as the flasks destroyed: but new wine must be put into new strong flasks; and both are preserved.

Luke, 39. The gentler discipline to which my disciples have been hitherto accustomed, cannot be suddenly altered, as ye propose, into severe restrictions: they must be inured gradually to the new doctrines and laws of the Gospel: for no man who has drunk old wine mellowed by age, will immediately choose to

drink *new* and harsh ; for *he says, The old is better ;* and more pleasant.

The leathern bottles were made of goat-skins.

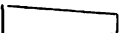
SELF-CONCEIT and contempt of our neighbour generally proceed from external mortification. The humble man looks not on the life of his neighbour, but to imitate the good which he observes therein. Thus the Pharisees who usually fasted twice a-week, though not bound by any legal ordinance to that effect, pretend to be surprised that Jesus and his disciples should observe a less rigid system of holiness. Our Lord, in reply, does not absolutely forbid fasting as an abstract duty ; but considers it to be subject to the due regulation of causes and seasons. If the friends of a bridegroom were not expected to fast during marriage-festivities ; neither could the disciples of Jesus be urged to fast, while they enjoyed the presence of the great bridegroom of the Church. But when after the removal of our Lord from his earthly ministry, they would be subjected to many persecutions, privations, and sufferings, then would be the appropriate season for mourning and fasting, as the passing exigence might require. All things should be estimated by their agreement and disagreement, properly adapted to persons, times, and circumstances. The institutes of the Pharisees and of Jesus cannot accord : he came to abolish them, and not to incorporate them. To urge the disciples of Jesus into the observance of unnecessary and uncalled-for austerities, would be as absurd and injurious as to patch the hole of an old and rotten garment with a piece of new and coarse cloth, not dressed by the fuller ; or to put new wine, the fermentation of which had not subsided, into old, and therefore weak, leathern-bottles. In the former case, the coarser cloth drags a piece from the border of the old, and makes the rent larger : in the latter, the fermentation is too powerful ; so that the wine is spilt, and the skin is burst. And as a palate, long accustomed to old and mellow wine, rejects the taste of what is new and harsher ; so the disciples who had found rest to their souls in the easy yoke and light burden of Christ, would not relish to be heavy-laden with the rigid austerities, recommended by the Pharisees. Nor were the disciples as yet so fully established in

his doctrines, as to have acquired strength to endure any extraordinary hardships.

Christ would not discourage his disciples by over-rigorous institutions : and it is unfit that his religion should be burdened with them. He suits the duties of his people to their circumstances ; and kindly proportions their work to their strength, with a tender regard to their weakness, till, by degrees, they may be fitted for the more difficult and humbling services. The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy : all the trees in Christ's garden are not of the same growth. There are babes in Christ, and grown men : to the men, he gives meat ; to the babes, milk. Christ would not speak to his disciples the many things which they could not bear. As Jacob was careful not to over-drive the cattle, nor expose the children to fatigue ; such is the care of Christ, exerted to the little ones of his flock : he leads them gently. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he would not bring them by the way of the Philistines, lest they should repent, when they saw war, and return to Egypt. (Exod. xiii. 17.) From the example of Christ, and the whole genius of his Gospel, let us learn to make all proper allowances to those about us, that we may teach them, and train them up as they are able to bear it ; not crushing them under any unnecessary load, nor denying them any indulgence which true friendship will permit us to grant them ; lest the good ways of God should be misrepresented, disgraced, abandoned, through our imprudent, though well-meaning, severity ; a caution to be peculiarly observed in our conduct towards young persons. Men sometimes cause a soul to lose that portion of grace which it had, by urging it too soon to engage in the ways of perfection, of which it is not as yet capable. Very auspicious beginnings and great hopes of conversion are often ruined by men's proceeding too hastily, by endeavouring to make their own designs take place, and to have the honour of that success which is due to God alone. Give, Lord, the spirit of thy conduct to the ministers of thy work, that they may know how to manage and improve thy interests in the souls of men, without the least damage to them. (DODDRIDGE. QUESNEL.)

Our Lord, dining in the house of a Pharisee, censures the vain-glory of the guests, and their love of precedence. He inculcates the grace of general humility. LUKE, xiv. 7-11.

AND he uttered a *parable* [or moral precept] to those who were invited, when he observed how they took in preference the uppermost couches, saying unto them, 8, *When thou art invited by any man to a marriage-feast, do not go and recline upon the uppermost couch: lest a more honourable man than thou be invited by him; 9, and he who invited thee and him, come and say to thee, 'Give place to this man:;' and thou shouldest begin, with shame, to take the lowest couch. 10. But, on the contrary, when thou art invited, go and recline on the lowest couch: that when he who invited thee, comes into the room, he may say to thee, 'Friend, go up to a higher couch, nearer to mine.'* Then thou shalt have respect and honour in the sight of thy fellow-guests. 11. *For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

The *triclinium* (or dining-room) takes its name from usually having *three couches*; sloping somewhat in the form of a wedge or inclined plane : Dr. SMITH'S "Dictionary of Antiqq." p. 443. The number of couches varied according to the number of guests. They were arranged as follows:

1	2	3	
$\frac{1}{t}$	$\frac{2}{t}$	$\frac{3}{t}$	1-9 denote couches. After the meal,
4 $\frac{1}{t}$		$\frac{3}{t}$ 5	the guests leaned on their left elbow. t t
6 $\frac{1}{t}$		$\frac{3}{t}$ 7	denote tables for each guest, or each sepa-
8 $\frac{1}{t}$	e	$\frac{3}{t}$ 9	rate party of guests. e , the entrance for
			the slaves, to arrange the tables, and wait
			upon the guests.

Among the Romans, three, sometimes four, persons reclined on one couch: among the Greeks, five,—sometimes more.

When three persons occupied a couch, the middle place was the most honourable. The host reclined on the middle couch (2) of those which were placed across, at the upper end. His couch was esteemed the most honourable. The others increased in honour, as they approached the upper end. See, ante, p. 352.

Our Lord recommends his disciples to place themselves

modestly, as at 8, or 9: that when the host enters, he may invite them to *go up higher*, as to 4 or 5, or to one of the cross couches.

THE instruction, primarily directed by our Lord to abate the pride of the Pharisees, who claimed, on all occasions, the homage of precedence, is not less intended for the instruction of his disciples in general.

Humility is a grace of the first rank and eminence in Christianity. It is mentioned in Scripture with peculiar marks of distinction and honour. "What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to walk *humbly* with thy God?" (Micah, vi. 8.) "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off." (Psal. cxxxviii. 6.) "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," in the Gospel-dispensation. (Matth. xviii. 4.) "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity: I dwell with him also that is of an humble spirit." (Isa. lvii. 15.)

Humility is a necessary introduction to the graces and duties of Christianity. It is necessary to *faith*. Without this, we shall not be in a disposition to receive the doctrines of divine Revelation, as undoubted truths, upon the sole testimony of God. Pride caused "Christ crucified, to be a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks."

Humility is necessary to *obedience*. A proud heart must be humbled before it can say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Without humility, we shall not value and receive a Saviour, as he is offered in the Gospel. We shall not be fond of being beholden to another for our pardon and acceptance with God, till we have an abasing sense of our own guilty and miserable condition. The Pharisee trusted in himself, that he was righteous, and so came to God with an arrogant self-sufficiency: the publican, having a sense of his unworthiness, humbly prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner."

Without humility, we shall not prize the grace of the Holy Spirit, nor live in a constant dependence on his aids.

Without humility, we cannot persevere in our adherence to Christ. The proud man, full of himself, is not easily content to be meanly thought of by others, and to sacrifice reputation

and comfort to the pleasing of God and the securing of a good conscience.

Without humility, we shall be indisposed to receive assistance, in the way to heaven, from the admonitions of pious friends and parents; supposing ourselves too good proficient to learn.

Without humility, we cannot perform our duty to our fellow-creatures. A haughty mind will ill comport with becoming all things to all men, that we may gain some: with pleasing our neighbour for his good to edification; with forgiveness of injuries; with condescension to the weaknesses of other men.

Humility is a grace which recommends religion to every beholder. And, therefore, as we are concerned to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," and to "take care that our good be not evil spoken of," it concerns us to live in the grace of humility.

Humility is eminently recommended to us by the examples of the most eminently pious men. Job refused to justify himself before God. Abraham styled himself *dust and ashes*. St. Paul called himself *the least of all saints*.

In the character of Christ, there is hardly one part, of which the Gospel gives more instances than of his humbleness of mind; nor any in which he is more frequently and expressly proposed to us for a pattern.

Though he was no lower a person than God for evermore, yet he was content to take upon him the nature, the state, the sinless infirmities of mankind, to be made of a woman, made under the Law. From this condescension, the apostle argues, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, took upon himself the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men."

When Jesus appeared in the world, in human nature, he contented not himself merely to lay aside the glory of heaven; but he appeared with many circumstances of meanness. He descended from a family which was then very obscure; which had lost the ancient grandeur of his father David. There were no sumptuous preparations made for his nativity; but, in his after-life, as now, he had scarce a place where to lay his head. While he was growing up, he lived with his reputed father; and thence was styled on one occasion, the "carpenter's son."

When he entered upon his public ministry, the generality of his disciples were poor fishermen, or men in a low condition.

As man, he was a pattern of great humility towards God. "He sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him." He ascribed the glory of his works to his Father. He paid him all religious homage in acts of worship, and cheerfully submitted to his will in the severest and the most degrading sufferings.

Our Lord, as a pattern of the greatest humility to mankind, was ready to condescend to the meanest persons, in order to their good. He stood still in the road, and regarded the cry of a blind mendicant, when the multitude would have silenced the importunate petitioner. We behold our Lord taking up children in his arms, and blessing them, though his disciples had endeavoured to prevent their approach. He washed the feet of his disciples, that he might teach them a lesson of humility and courtesy towards others. He made it evident in his whole conduct, that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

Inference 1. Those who are destitute of this grace, whatever profession they have made of Christianity, have, in truth, the rudiments of it yet to learn. If they have been soaring upward to heaven itself in the sublimest speculations; if they have built up their hopes to the greatest height upon other grounds, without laying this at the foundation; they must be content to come down again to learn this lesson, which enters into the elements of Christ's religion. A proud Christian is a contradictory character; as much as it would be to say, a wicked saint. The whole Gospel, in its precepts, its great example, its glorious prospects, tends to humble the pride of man: and, therefore, whoever will come after Christ, must, in this respect, deny himself.

2. We should look principally to the temper of our spirits, in order to judge of our humility. We may have the character of humble people with men from a modest outside, a condescending carriage, and lowly speeches; while God who searches the heart, may see there pride reigning under these fair disguises; and that all such plausible appearances are only intended to gratify and support a haughty and overbearing dispo-

sition. Humbleness of mind makes the Christian temper; and the poor in spirit are the heirs of the promise.

8. No single branch of goodness deserves more of our attention, in order to judge of the improving or declining state of our souls, than this of humility. If we grow in knowledge, and are puffed-up along with it, we lose more in goodness than we gain in profitable furniture. If we improve in other excellencies, but outstrip that improvement in the conceit we have of ourselves, we only make those things nothing in the sight of God, which would otherwise be valuable. This is a dead fly that will spoil the whole box of ointment. Whether we advance in right knowledge of God or ourselves, it cannot fail to make us sensible of our defects, and humble in the sense of them. A man that improves in learning, sees more defects in his attainments when he hath made a good progress, than he did at setting out: he discerns a larger field of knowledge before him, after all his advances, than he had any notion of, when he first turned his thoughts that way. So it is with an active Christian: he sees so much before him, that "he forgets those things that are behind, and reaches forth unto those that are before." This was St. Paul's character, when he was most fixedly set in heaven's way: and it will be the character of any Christian, when he is ripening fastest for the heavenly harvest. (Dr. EVANS.) [See Sermon cxv., in my "First Course of Sermons for the Year;" and Sermon cix., in my "Course of Sermons on the Psalms."]

Our Lord complains of the perverseness of that generation. MATTHEW, xi. 6-19; LUKE, vii. 31-35.

[*And the Lord Jesus further said,*] *To what then shall I compare the men of this generation? and to what are they like? 32. They are like little-children, being in the public places, calling-out to one another and saying, We have piped to you pleasant and cheerful tunes, and ye have not danced: we have chaunted a funereal dirge, and ye have not wept or smitten your breasts. Such is the obstinacy of the Jews. 33. For John the Baptist came with abstemious austerity, neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He is a demoniac. 34. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, familiarly associating himself with you as your guest, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-*

bibber ; a friend and companion of publicans and sinners. 35. But the divine wisdom will be justified and vindicated by all its children.

THE austerities of John the Baptist, and Christ's humanity, gentleness, and condescension, were alike disagreeable to the malicious Jews ; and upon both, they put a construction equally perverse. Our Lord compares them to children, sitting in the market-place ; but some of them so froward that no contrivance could induce them to join in the diversions of their fellows. In Judea (as elsewhere) cheerful music with dancing, was used at feasts : melancholy airs, uttered by hired mourners, were adopted at funerals. The children appear to have imitated those things in their diversions ; while one band of them performed the musical part,—if the other would not answer by dancing or lamenting, as the game directed, this sullenness gave occasion to the complaint, ' We have piped or mourned, and ye have not performed your corresponding part : ' which, at length, passed into a proverb. The Jews, in equal obstinacy, censured the mortified life of the Baptist, whose austerity is represented by the mournful airs ; nor did they listen to the cheerful music, which was the emblem of our Lord's sweet and affable instructions. Our Saviour briefly animadverts on this perverseness of his countrymen, by saying, that *wisdom is justified or vindicated by all her children* : though many of the Jews are so froward and foolish as to censure the proceedings of me and my fore-runner, yet all the counsels of God are approved and vindicated by the *children of wisdom* ; by those who are so wise as to lay aside prejudice, and to enquire into the methods of divine providence with humility and sincerity. These children of wisdom will see, that the difference between the manners of the Baptist and myself suits the purposes of our respective appearances, and is adapted to promote the general designs of God in relation to the Gospel.

The assertion of our Lord suggests the following considerations :—

1. The children of wisdom, all thoughtful and discerning persons, will justify the conduct of our Lord, in his conversing among men in a familiar manner. Our Lord came (among other purposes of his mission) to promote universal good-will. His

affable and condescending compliances, for which the Jews reviled him, were intended as a general pattern: and it was such as ought to have civilized the very Pharisees themselves. Though our Lord occasionally retreated into solitude, yet his chief business obliged him to frequent places, where his miracles, the credentials of his ministry, might be openly displayed. He prepared his hearers for the reception of his doctrine by a gracious conformity, on all innocent occasions, to the common usages of men. By mingling with them, even at the hours of refreshment, he found fit opportunities of conciliating their affection, and of sanctifying their food with heavenly instructions.

2. *The children of wisdom will justify the wisdom of our Lord*, in appearing in humble condition. If the Messiah had assumed a pomp and power suited to the political and worldly desires of his countrymen, the enemies of the Gospel might have ascribed its establishment to secular influence. But when Christ chose his preachers from low station, and such as had no attractive qualities, the foolishness of God was miraculously founded upon the wisdom of man, by bringing to nought things that were, by things that were not.

3. *The children of wisdom will justify the wisdom of their Lord* in reference to his precepts. To speak to a sensual man on the pleasures of temperance; or to warn an unjust man, that his crooked paths lead to ruin; is to address them in language which they esteem folly. But the true disciple knows, that obedience to the Gospel fills the breast with substantial comfort; and that the conquests, by grace, over evil lusts, is preferable to licentious liberty. He anticipates the day, when sinners will see the righteous triumphant; and be compelled to exclaim, "*We fools* accounted his life madness: how is he now numbered among the children of God!"

4. Lastly, we learn that a Christian has no reason to be discouraged upon the account of those calumnies and reproaches, which wicked men may cast upon him. If our Blessed Saviour himself could not escape the stroke of evil tongues, surely none of his followers will wonder at the like treatment. When we consider how amiable and inoffensive Christian virtue is in itself, it may seem strange that it should meet with enemies. However, it appears from our Saviour's own observation, that these

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are not to be looked upon as competent judges: and, therefore, a good man, upon that account, has no reason to be solicitous either about their praise or dispraise; since he is sure of approving himself, by conscientious labour, in the sight of his Redeemer. Let the opposition and contradiction of sinners be what it will in this life; yet, by a patient continuance in well-doing, the children of wisdom will find glory, honour, and immortality, in the life to come. (BALGUY, chiefly.)

Our Lord urges the suddenness of approaching vengeance as an engagement to constant watchfulness. MATTHEW, xxiv. 43, 44; LUKE, xxi. 34, 35.

Luke, 34, 35: TAKE heed to yourselves, lest at any time, your hearts be overcharged and your rational powers be stupified by gluttony and drunkenness, and by secular cares; and so that awful day should come unexpected upon you. 35. For it shall come upon all them who dwell on the face of this whole land, as a snare on careless birds.

Matt. xxiv. 43, 44: But this ye know, that if the master of a house which has been plundered, had known in what hour of the night the thief would have come, he would have watched; and would not have suffered his house to be dug-through. Therefore, be ye also ready: for at an hour when ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

THOUGH Christ's warning to his disciples primarily referred to the destruction of Jerusalem; yet as that awful event was a type of a still more awful event, the Last Judgment; we are equally obliged to adopt the same caution in respect of death and its final consequence.

Over the last great day, God has thrown a thick veil, through which no eye but his own can penetrate. But of this, we may be assured, that he is equally benevolent and merciful in whatever he reveals, and in whatever he withholds from us.

If the day and hour of the last judgment were known with precision and certainty; its terrors, if near, would intimidate too much; if distant, might affect us too little: in the former case, we should be too neglectful of our affairs in this world; in the latter, too inattentive to the concerns of the next. God, there-

fore, in all the dispensations of his providence equally wise and good, and who desires to have both our hopes and our fears, our knowledge and our ignorance, to be alike instrumental to our happiness, has been pleased to hide the important secret in his own bosom; to conceal from us the period of the general judgment, in order that we may be always prepared, without being terrified; attentive always to our salvation in the next world, without too much indifference to the concerns of the present.

Hence appears the wisdom of holding ourselves always in a state of preparation for the coming of our Lord. Whenever we reflect, that the present life is meant to be introductory to another infinitely more important state of being; and that the awful period is approaching, how soon we know not, when we must all appear before the tribunal of the righteous Sovereign of the earth, whose irreversible sentence will be decisive of our fate for ever;—this surely ought to create in us a most serious solicitude to avoid every behaviour that may offend our Almighty Judge; and apply to every duty that can recommend us to his approbation and acceptance.

At what distance this great event may be, or how long our Lord may delay his coming, we are not informed. Our Lord himself has foretold, that *as a snare, it will come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth*, and will surprise them in such an hour as they think not. The judgment of the great day, may possibly, even now, be near approaching; in which case, if we are unprepared, it will be too late for preparation to begin. Such as our condition is, such will be our irreversible state for endless ages. If we are not in readiness, the opportunity for it, and we ourselves, are for ever lost.

It may indeed be supposed, with more probability, that this may be a remote event, and that the general judgment may be at the distance of many ages; but yet another awful event must soon and certainly happen. The period when our state of probation will determine and our trial be concluded, cannot be far distant; and that event is, in effect, with regard to our future condition, the same as that of judgment; and, like it too, unknown and wrapt in darkness. For such is the natural weakness of the human frame; such the various disorders and unknown accidents to which we stand exposed; so numerous, so

unseen, the avenues to eternity; that we ought not, cannot, be secure even of to-morrow.

As our Lord inculcates the necessity of vigilance, so does he point out the causes which lead to this fatal carelessness; 1, the *cares of this life*; and, 2, *intemperance*, implied in the words, *surfeiting and drunkenness*.

1. While men consider this world to be their portion, they must be very reluctant to expect its dissolution, and prepare to meet their God. The cares of this life, when encouraged, so occupy the hours, that no leisure is allowed for concerns of a spiritual kind; so that under the toil of projecting and plodding, the whole man is alive only to the world, and is dead to God and to Christ.

2. That spiritual vigilance is much impeded by *intemperance*, is evident from its general character. Intemperance is one great mark, by which the Gentile is disgracefully distinguished from the Christian. (1 Pet. iv. 3; 1 Thessa. v. 5-8.) It tends to darken the powers of the understanding; harden the heart; stupify the conscience; so that the mind is unaffected by what ought most to affect it. (Hos. iv.) It depresses and degrades the soul into the most carnal and torpid sensuality; and thus not only is the very worst preparation to welcome the advent of our future Judge, but hinders men in every mode of spiritual preparation.

Not that it is to be understood, that a future judgment should be the perpetual object of our meditations; for that is incompatible with the condition of human life, and with the duties we owe to the world and to ourselves. But in order to be habitually prepared, let us begin an immediate reformation of what we find amiss in our manners, and live in a regular persevering obedience to the divine laws. The best, the only secure preparative for hereafter, are the virtues of a Christian life. Without these, the last hour may, when we look not for it, hurry us away to judgment before our accounts are ready, and convey us out of this world before we have made provision for the next. (CARR.)

Our Lord urges upon his disciples the necessity of considering the difficulties of religion before they take up a profession of it. LUKE, xiv. 25-35.

AND *there went great multitudes with him in his journey towards Jerusalem; and he turned, and said unto them, 'If any one comes to me, and, in comparison with me, does not less affectionately love his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, nay and himself too, he cannot be my disciple.*

27. *And whosoever does not resolve to bear his cross, and to come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

28. *For which of you, intending to build a turretted mansion, does not sit down first, and calculate the expense, whether he has sufficient to finish it? 29. Lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all who behold it, begin to deride him, 30, saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.'*

31. *Or what king, going to engage in battle with another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him who cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet at a distance, he sendeth an ambassage, and begs conditions of peace. 33. So likewise (continued Jesus, addressing himself more especially to his future apostles and preachers) whosoever he be of you, who forsaketh not all that he hath, and would not resign his possessions rather than renounce his adopted religion, cannot be my disciple.*

34. *With steadiness of purpose and affection, ye will resemble salt which is good: but if by worldly attachment, ye abandon your new obligations, what will ye be but the salt which has grown insipid; and wherewith shall it be seasoned? what can reclaim you? ye will become vile, and useless to yourselves and to the Church; even as insipid salt is neither fit for manuring the land, nor even for a place on the dunghill: but men throw it out of doors.*

He of you that hath ears to hear these warnings, let him hear them with due attention.

It is to be feared that many dream that they are interested in the cross of Christ, who were never willing to bear the cross for him; and who neither renounce their worldly interest nor

mortify their lusts in order to follow him. Our religious profession must be undertaken with that deliberate consideration, which becomes a matter of such great importance. A hasty purpose will never bear us through the difficulties we must expect to encounter: rash vows and thoughtless adventures, in this case, will only expose us to the derision of others, to remorse of conscience, and to the anger of God.

That the apostles might feel the necessity of weighing deliberately, whether they were able and prepared to bear all the losses and persecution to which the profession of the Gospel would expose them, our Lord desires them to consider how prudence would direct them to act in other cases of importance: "The most thoughtless person among you will not resolve on a matter of such importance as the building of a house, without previously calculating the expense; because ye know that the builder who begins without counting the cost, exposes himself to the ridicule of all passengers, who look on the half-finished edifice. In like manner, the king who declares war without comparing the number of his forces with that of the enemy, and without considering whether the bravery of his troops and the conduct of his generals will be able to make up what he wants in numbers, is sure to be ingloriously defeated, unless he humbly sues for peace before it comes to an engagement. In the same manner, whosoever engages to be my disciple without counting the cost, and resolving to part with all that he hath, will certainly be disheartened by the unexpected difficulties with which he will meet; and abandoning my service, will expose himself to great shame and loss." It would be foolish to urge the letter of this precept strictly; and maintain that a man cannot be Christ's disciple, unless he throws all his goods into the sea, divorces his wife, and bids farewell to his children and relations. None more truly renounces all that he hath, than the man who *preserves himself ready every moment to do so*, and follows his business free and disentangled. Such a person will cheerfully part with life, and every thing dear in life, when called thereto. The apostles themselves retained their possessions: thus John took into his house his Lord's mother: Peter paid tribute at Capernaum: he and other disciples had their own boats and nets (John, xxi.); but at the same time, they had *forsaken all* in the true sense of their Master's precept; being

ready, at his call, to leave their families, occupations, and possessions, as often and as long as he thought fit to employ them in the work of the Gospel. This self-denial was peculiarly necessary for them; because it was the spiritual *salt* which would preserve them from apostasy, and others from corruption; as it would not only weaken the temptation to which they might be exposed; but its beauty, appearing with great lustre in their behaviour, would allure others to become disciples and true subjects of his kingdom. At the same time, our Lord solemnly warns the apostles, that *salt may lose its savour; be cast out, and trodden under foot*. If they whose business it was to reform mankind, be themselves wicked, they cannot be reclaimed; but will be the most useless and contemptible of men. (See, ante, p. 33.)

Though we are not summoned to the grievous trials and privations, to which the apostles were subjected, yet the precept *to forsake all*, cannot, to us, be a dead letter. How, then, shall it be fulfilled? that by thus showing ourselves to be true disciples of Jesus, he may not *cast us out as salt that is insipid*.

1. We are to *forsake* our former iniquities, *altogether*, and without reserve. To retain some favourite sin for our occasional gratification, is that *to leave all* for the sake of Christ?

2. We must *forsake all* our carnal prejudices, and sit as children at the foot of the cross. There is a mental and intellectual self, which disputes, where it ought to obey; and which sets itself in array against the wisdom of God. A proud reluctance to abandon long-cherished theories in divine matters, was the cause that while St. Paul, at Athens, was discoursing on the Resurrection, his philosophical hearers sneeringly asked, 'What would this babbler say?'

3. If we are summoned, on some occasions, to *abandon all* our possessions, we must *forsake*, on every occasion, *all* iniquitous methods of increasing them. We are to renounce private interest, whenever it interferes with our obedience to Jesus Christ. In the daily and hourly dealings of life, what opportunities of undue advantage! what inducements to profit by them! But it is not to dishonesty, according to the ordinary acceptation of the term, that the guilt of unjust regard to interest is restricted. Countless are the occasions of acquiring money, or of furthering our ease or advancement, or some other

worldly object, by various methods; the iniquity of which, light as it may be deemed, is, in many instances, not inferior to that of dishonesty; by flattery; by bribery; by sinful compliances; by ministering to prejudice or pride; by raising or diffusing unfounded reports concerning our competitors. Does the man who pursues his benefit by any of these means, *leave all* for the sake of Christ? He prefers interest to Christ.

4. We are to cast away all reliance on merit of our own, for acceptance with God. The true disciple, in self-examination, sees his heart full of depravity; and his conduct, a mass of sin. He becomes conscious how odious he has rendered himself in the sight of a holy God. He contemplates the divine justice; and trembles at the punishment which he has incurred. He considers the divine power; and beholds the impossibility of escape. But an atonement is set before him, in the blood of the Son of God: there he beholds a ransom; and pardon, and peace, and happiness. 'Let my righteousness' (he exclaims) 'be the righteousness which is of God, by faith in the Lord Jesus. He that hath the Son of God, hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. There is no other name, under heaven, among men, whereby I may be saved.'

5. We must follow our Redeemer unto the end. From every Christian, patient continuance in well-doing is indispensably required. Who is it that the Scripture saith shall be saved? He that endureth unto the end. Who is it that shall reap the everlasting recompense? He who presseth onward in the path of righteousness, neither weary through sloth, nor fainting through timidity. No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. If you persevere, he who has begun a good work in you, will complete it. The arm of your Saviour is not shortened. Look up still to him; and go forth conquering, and to conquer. Yet a few more days or years of conflict; and the victory is achieved; and the recompense of victory will be secured for ever. (T. GISBORNE, chiefly.)

A provident house-holder produces various stores. Matthew, xiii. 51, 52.

JESUS saith unto them, 'Have ye understood all these things?'

They say unto him, 'Yea, Lord.' Then he said to them, If ye really understand these things, therefore ye will remember that ye must suit your instruction to all capacities. In this respect, every evangelical scribe who is disciplined for the kingdom of heaven, is like a provident house-keeper, who, having laid up various stores, produces out of his repository things new and old, as his friends may require.

The word *scribe* here denotes an *office*, not a *sect*.

'To bring out of a treasure or store-house things new and old,' was a proverbial expression for a ready, liberal, and diversified hospitality.

THE *kingdom of heaven* here signifies the *Church of Christ*, into which proselytes would enter by the preaching of the apostles. And as our Lord often expresses offices and things under the Gospel by alluding to those under the law, he applies the term *scribe* to his disciples and apostles, who were appointed to explain and enforce the evangelical law, as the Scribes had been occupied in expounding the Mosaic. As the scribe of the law did, with much labour, stock himself with all variety of learning requisite to find out the sense of the same; so the evangelical scribe or preacher should bring as much learning, and bestow as much labour, in his much higher employment. Hence the Christian preacher is said to be *instructed*, taught, schooled, disciplined, to the work, by long exercise and study. The observance of these precious requisites would justify the resemblance between the householder and the preacher. As the former, by previously laying up a large stock of provisions, could entertain his friends, in accommodation to their different tastes, with plenty and variety; so the preacher, being thoroughly furnished with a variety of knowledge, would be enabled to bring forth old truths with new illustrations; and to discharge the diversified offices of instructing, persuading, exhorting, convincing, reforming, alarming, encouraging; and, in short, to reach men's minds and inclinations, according as they may chance to be affected, on a great variety of occasions, by the controversies, opinions, fashions, and vices of the passing age.

It is evident, therefore, that those who are appointed to instruct others, have need to be well instructed themselves. If

the lip of the priest should keep knowledge, it must be previously stored in the treasury of the head.

The necessity of preparations for the ministry may be drawn from the dignity of the subject ; which is divinity. And what is divinity, but a doctrine treating of the nature, attributes, and works of the great Jehovah, as he stands related to rational creatures : and the way how rational creatures may serve, worship, and enjoy him ? And if so, is not the subject-matter of divinity the greatest, and the design and business of it the noblest, in the world ; as being no less than to direct an immortal soul to its eternal felicity ? And can we think that a doctrine of that depth, that height, and that vast compass, does not worthily claim all the preparations, whereby the intellect and industry of man can fit him for it ? In other things, the art may excel the matter ; and the ornament we bestow, is better than the subject we bestow it upon : but in the Revelation of God, we have such a subject, as not only calls for, but commands,—and not only commands, but deserves, our utmost application ; a subject of that inherent worth, that it is not capable of any addition from us ; but shines through and above all the artificial lustre which we can put upon it. Such is the necessity of begging a divine blessing upon all seminaries of sound learning and religious education, that there never may be wanting fit and able persons to serve God both in Church and in State. (SOUTH.)

The question with which our Saviour prefaces the preceding parable, may be applied to all his parables, and remind us of our own personal interest in them : 51, “Jesus saith unto them, Have ye *understood* all these things ?” Let us not slightly pass over these divine truths, if we desire to be the better for them. Let this question of our Lord convince us of their importance. It is very proper when we read them, to call ourselves to account, as to the impressions which they make upon our mind and heart ; as to the use which our faith makes of them ; as to the consequences which we should draw from them for the regulation of our lives, and for an estrangement from worldly lusts. (QUESNEL.) Parables possess an inward marrow different from what their exterior form would lead us to expect : and as gold is sought in the earth ; the kernel, in the nut ; and the hidden fruit, in the rough coating of the chestnut ; so in parables,

there is a divine spirit and meaning which we must explore. (See FORD, on *Matthew*, p. 187.)

The question of our Lord, '*Understandest thou all these things,*' extends beyond his parables, and is applicable to "*all holy scriptures which have been written for our learning.*" The reading of Scripture (as any other religious duty) must be commenced with earnest prayer for the divine blessing upon our studies, that we may not only read, but learn and inwardly digest. It was the supplication of David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law." As sinners have ears, and hear not the warning voice of God; so have they eyes, and see not the beauty of his word. Prayer will remove the veil. Prayer will conciliate God to be his own interpreter. New truths will be suggested; and truths, already seen, will stand forth more prominently.

The signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem: MATTHEW, xxiv. 32, 33; MARK, xiii. 28; LUKE, xxi. 29.

AND he spake to them a parable, saying, *Behold now, and learn a parable [or illustration] from the fig-tree, and all the trees: when its branch is now become tender, while the sap is mounting, and the leaves now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that summer [or spring] is now nigh at hand: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these preceding things come to pass, know ye and be assured, that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand, even at the doors.*

The ancients divided the year into summer and winter; summer included the spring, and winter included the autumn.

OUR Lord had foretold the total destruction of the Temple. The disciples, alarmed at the awful prediction, anxiously enquire, *saying, Master, what shall be the sign of thy coming?* (Matthew, xxiv. 3.) Our Lord proceeds to specify some distinct signs, by which the approaching destruction of Jerusalem would be as clearly indicated, as the approach of spring is evidenced by the new leaves and budding of the fig-tree and all other trees.

I. *Matthew, 5; Mark, 6; Luke, 8: Many shall come in the assumption of MY NAME and character, saying, 'I am the Messiah; and the time draweth near for deliverance from the Roman yoke;'* and, by these pretences *shall deceive many.*

These *false Christs* began to appear soon after our Lord's death, and multiplied as the national calamities increased. Dositheus, the Samaritan, affirmed, that he was the Christ promised by Moses; and Simon Magus, that he was the Son of God.

II. *Matthew, 6; Mark, 7; Luke, 9: But when ye shall hear of WARS and RUMOURS OF WAR, and commotions [or seditions], see that ye be not troubled. Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*

Among rumours of wars, was the report that Vitellius was about to march through Palestine against Arabia; and that Caligula intended to send an expedition against Jerusalem, if the Jews refused to erect his statue in their Temple. The Roman empire was convulsed by the claims of various competitors for the imperial throne. In various cities, in which the Jews had settled, the most sanguinary contests took place between them and the native inhabitants.

III. *Matthew, 7; Mark, 8; Luke, 10: There shall be FAMINES and PESTILENCES.*

The *famine* predicted by Agabus (Acts, xx. 28), which is also mentioned by two Roman historians, came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar; and was so severe at Jerusalem, that many people perished for want of food. *Pestilences* usually arise from scarcity or badness of provision. That Judea was afflicted with pestilence, we learn from Josephus.

IV. *Matthew, 7; Mark, 8; Luke, 11: There shall be EARTHQUAKES.*

Grotius reckons up many *earthquakes*, which happened in the reigns of Claudius and Nero.

V. *Luke, 11: There shall be fearful sights and SIGNS FROM HEAVEN.*

Josephus relates many *prodigies* which preceded the siege of Jerusalem; and Tacitus gives a summary account of the same occurrences. As the testimonies of Josephus and Tacitus confirm the predictions of Christ, so the predictions of Christ confirm the wonders recorded by these historians.

VI. *Matthew, 9; Mark, 9; Luke, 12: Before all these things shall happen, they shall PERSECUTE you, and shall deliver you up to the greater councils and to the synagogues; and shall cast some of you into prisons, to be scourged and afflicted; and shall kill some of you; and by preaching a religion contrary to all other religions, ye shall be hated by all nations; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings, for my name's-sake.*

The apostles suffered a great fight of afflictions: they were imprisoned (Acts, iv. 8; xvi. 23); brought before councils and Sanhedrims (Acts, viii. 3): before kings (Acts, xii. 1, 2): before rulers, Gallio, Felix, and Festus (Acts, xviii. 12; xxiii. 33; xxv. 6): beaten in the Synagogue (Acts, v. 18; xvi. 23: 2 Cor. xi. 23). Tacitus and Suetonius have recorded the persecutions raised against the Christians by Nero.

VII. *Mark, xiii. 10: The Gospel must be PUBLISHED AMONG ALL NATIONS.*

The fulfilment of this prophecy may be gathered from various passages in the "Acts of the Apostles." (ii. 41; xi. 21; xvi. 5; xix. 20.) The epistles of St. Paul are addressed to Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossæ, Thessalonica, Philippi, and to the Churches in Galatia; those of St. Peter to the Christians "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."

The preceding SIGNS serve to illustrate the parable [or, rather illustration] which our Lord adopted in answer to the question of the disciples, *What shall be the SIGN of thy coming?* The circumstances of the siege do not belong to the parable: suffice it to say, that the number of the captives, taken during the time of the war, was ninety-seven thousand; and of those that died or were slain during the siege, eleven hundred thousand; and that, of Jerusalem itself, not one stone was left upon another. (MACKNIGHT, § 123; WHITBY on *Matthew*, xxiv.; HORNE, i. 615-24.)

While we thus allude to that aggravated ruin, which was brought upon the Jews for neglecting Christ; even great tribulation, such as had never, from the very beginning of the world, fallen upon any other nation, nor shall ever be equalled; so the particular prediction, when compared with the event, must surely confirm our faith in Christ, as the great Prophet which

was to come into the world. And we shall see reason to admire the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence in giving us, almost by a miraculous preservation of the author, such a commentary on this prophecy as is delivered down to us in the works of *Josephus*, the Jewish historian, which throw a much stronger light upon it than if they had been written by a Christian on purpose to illustrate it.

The whole of this prophecy most evidently shows us, how vain and dangerous it is to trust in external privileges, and to cry out, as these foolish and wretched Jews did, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*, are these buildings; when of this stately and magnificent structure, within less than half a century after it was finished, not one stone was left upon another.

The Jews eagerly listened to the very name of a Messiah, by whomsoever it was assumed; while they rejected him whom God had sent them, and who had so long, and with so much importunity, been renewing to them the offers of life and salvation. May none of us ever know the sad impatience with which condemned sinners will wish, and wish in vain, for those overtures and messages of grace which they now despise! In that sense, *wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together*: wherever there is the like unbelief and impenitence, there will be, in its degree, the like ruin. Christ has graciously told us these things before: may we humbly attend to the warning, that none of this terror and destruction may ever come upon us. Sins like theirs, may be done in every age; and sufferings like theirs, may fall upon any nation. To despise the religion of the Son of God; to deny his divinity; to mistake ceremonies for holiness; to lean on self-righteousness; to pervert his Scriptures; to forget his laws; to hate his followers; and to crucify the Son of God afresh in the wickedness of our lives—are crimes, which are confined to no rank, or station, or country; and it is always in the will of a holy, and the power of an Almighty God, to punish the evil-doers for the evil they have done. The Gentile, as well as the Jew, may sin against his Redeemer and his God; and, like the Jew, be scattered abroad in the breath of God's anger. For what merit hath the Gentile more than the Jew? or what city of the earth can have more claims for mercy than the towers and the temples of Jerusalem?

‘If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off. For because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not, therefore, high-minded, but fear.’ (DODDRIDGE. BENSON.)

General characteristics of our Saviour’s Parables. *He taught them many things by Parables.* MARK, iv. 2.

PARABLE, in the literal sense of the word, is “the placing of two things in juxta-position, for the purpose of comparison.” Hence the term is applied to short compositions, in which the circumstances narrated and the instruction implied in them seem (as it were) to proceed with equal pace, and are each other’s counterpart. In the New Testament, *parable* sometimes denotes a proverbial saying, or sententious maxim: but more generally, is applied to those more extended comparisons, by which the moral lessons or prophecies of our Saviour, relative to his Church, his death, his office of Judge, are conveyed under images drawn from natural objects, or from some imaginary or real occurrence. As this mode of teaching had been familiar among Eastern nations, and had been adopted in the Jewish Scriptures, our Saviour did not deem it unworthy of his prudence, to accommodate himself to the taste of his countrymen.

The utility of this mode of instruction has been generally felt and acknowledged. A lesson founded upon known and familiar objects, is more perspicuous in itself, and makes a deeper and more lasting impression on the mind. The capacities which are unequal to the comprehension of continued and elaborate argument, are sensible to the more pleasing and less distracting instruction of parables; in which fancy is the handmaid to the understanding. In many cases, curiosity would be quickened to make more diligent search into the meaning, and be thus beguiled into a more extended knowledge. The feelings of vanity and self-sufficient pride are not alarmed and offended by advice, administered in this delicate and circuitous method. Even subjects, the most unwelcome to national prejudices, are

rendered less repugnant, when the force of the admonition is broken by the interposition of an amusing parable.

The parables of our Saviour exhibit all the preceding marks of advantage: but at the same time, they are superior, in many respects, to all compositions belonging to the same class.

They are remarkable for their conciseness, which fatigues not the attention: for their perspicuity which opens a ready passage into the minds even of the dull and ignorant: for their beauty, simplicity, and pathetic nature, which strike deeply into the heart.

They are not drawn from things which never happen, but from events of ordinary occurrence in human life. There is nothing in them wild, extravagant, and unworthy of the Teacher; no absurd and monstrous fictions, such as abound in the Jewish writings.

In the parables of Christ, the actors are not the inferior creatures, but men. Sometimes he leads us to draw instruction from the inferior living creatures: but the species of mankind is the principal and most distinguished part of the vast scene and spectacle of nature. Here, therefore, lies the fullest source of instruction, in regard to morality and religion.

A peculiar excellence of our Lord's parables, is the frequent introduction into them of his own character as the principal figure; and in views so various, important, and significant. We view, through the veil of parable, our Lord as the sower; the vine-dresser; the proprietor of an estate; the careful shepherd; the just master; the compassionate father; the splendid bridegroom; the potent nobleman; the heir of a kingdom; and the king who judges all mankind. A striking interest hence arises, between the simplicity of the descriptions, and the dignity of the speaker.

The parables of our Lord were not intended merely to amuse the imagination, and please the fancy of the hearer; but to purify his soul, amend his conduct, and lead him to the knowledge of God's will and intended dispensations.

They are uttered not by a fabulist or by a mere philosopher; but by the Son of God, who has authority to say, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

But the wide differences by which our Saviour's parables are distinguished from others, are (I.) partly the awfulness of

their prophetic scope ; and, (II.) partly, their extent of spiritual instruction.

I. The different soils to which the *sower* consigned the seed, are emblems of the reception which the Gospel would experience from men of different dispositions. The *tares* point out the mixture of corruptions, with which Gospel-doctrines would be polluted ; and a separation of good and bad, in a final day of judgment ; a doctrine repeated in the rejection of the *corrupt fish*, and the selection of the sound into vessels. The growth of the *grain of mustard seed*, and the influence of *leaven*, announce the spread of the Gospel in defiance of obstacles, insuperable by human powers. The *pearl*, and *treasure hid in a field*, declare the possession of the Gospel to be of more value than all earthly possessions. The rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles are portrayed in the *vineyard*, let out to husbandmen ; in the *nobleman* who went into a distant country ; in the gathering of the *halt* and the *maimed*, as guests to the marriage-feast ; and in the reward dispensed to the labourers hired at the *eleventh hour*.

II. The parables, relating to the important points of duty, are wonderfully impressive and wonderfully diversified. The *foolish Rich Man* ; the *Rich Man and Lazarus* ; the *unjust Steward* ; inculcate a right use of riches ; which become occasions of sin when ministering to useless boarding and to luxurious sensuality ; and operate as blessings, when applied as hopeful instruments of procuring admission into everlasting habitations. Universal benevolence is pathetically preached by the *Good Samaritan*. Forgiveness of injuries is enforced by the punishment of the *unrelenting Servant*. Encouragements to repentance are held out in the recovery of the *lost drachma*, and of the *wandering sheep* ; in the yearning of a pitying father towards a *returning prodigal* ; and in the *forgiven debtors*. Spiritual pride is forbidden in commendation of the humble *publican*. The insufficiency of bare external privileges, when not accompanied with the fruits of piety, is represented in the *barren fig-tree* levelled to the ground. Assiduity of devotion is commended in the attention which the widow extorted from the *unjust judge* ; and in the loaves which the importunate request of a *friend at midnight* procured from his friend. Vigilance and preparation

for our final account, are most solemnly impressed by the punishment which crushed the *careless* and profligate *servant*.

But if parables were meant as vehicles of instruction, why did our Saviour seem to answer, on one occasion (Matthew, xiii. 13), that he spoke in parables, in order not to be understood by his hearers? This difficulty will be removed by remembering, that while our Lord never refused to instruct those who sincerely desired it, the bad part of his audience deserved to be left in that ignorance which was entirely their own fault.

We will suppose part of his auditors to have been persons who had Moses and the Prophets, but would not hear them. It is not strange that Christ should refuse to instruct them; since the instruction which they had received before, had produced no good effect upon them.

Let us suppose them to have been such as the Prophet Isaiah describes; persons whose "hearts were waxed gross, and whose ears were dull of hearing;" and who had closed their eyes; men enslaved to their prejudices and vices. If Christ discoursed darkly to them; it is to be considered, that they hated the light, and hardened themselves against conviction.

Let us suppose, that they had seen some of the works of Christ, but were not the more disposed to acknowledge his authority; that they had heard him explain their duty in a familiar manner, but with a spirit superior to that of all their teachers, and yet had heard him in vain. No parables could be thought too obscure for them, upon whom the plainest doctrines and the testimony of miracles had been thrown away.

Let us suppose them to have been led by no better motive than curiosity, and to have come with no view to correct their faults. They hear Christ speaking in parables which they comprehend not, and they depart with the same temper; nor do they apply to him for further instruction. Such negligent hearers are justly sent away in ignorance.

Let us suppose them persuaded that God would never show the same favours to the Gentiles as to the Jews; that the ceremonial law and the temple should abide continually; that the Messiah should be a triumphant Prince, who would subdue all their enemies. If Christ had, in plain terms, laid open to them some of those mysteries which related to the Messiah, and to

the fortunes of the Jewish Church and State, he would only have provoked them, and made himself enemies of the greatest part of his hearers.

Let us suppose them to have been fully determined to part with nothing for the sake of religion. For such persons as these, unintelligible parables were as useful doctrines as the plainest parts of the Gospel. If Christ had told them expressly what he expected from them on entering into his service, they would have departed displeased and offended; sorrowful, at the best, to find required from them what they were resolved not to perform. (JORTIN.)

But if Christ has spoken unto us as to the wise and intelligent; if by grace it has been given to us to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; let us thankfully and earnestly apply to our own amendment the spiritual instruction conveyed in the diversified parables of our Lord. Let the amiable and gracious representations of God's marvellous loving-kindness towards penitents, engage us to forsake our evil ways. Let us be careful to maintain that humble frame of spirit which our Lord recommends; and cultivate real happiness without depending on mere external professions. Let us be assiduous, under many encouragements, to be diligent in communion with God by prayer; and, finally, to our prayers let us add vigilance, that we may not be surprised by our Lord's unexpected advent. Happy shall we be, if these excellent lessons of our heavenly Teacher be reduced, by his co-operating grace, into practice: thus uniting the glory of our Master with our own advantage, both in this and the future world. (LELAND. See Reverend T. H. HORNE's full and able discussion on Parables, vol. ii. part 2, § 5.)

I.

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ABBOT, George, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Born at Guildford, in Surrey, 1562; died at Croydon, 1633. One of the translators of the present version of the Bible, and a man of great abilities. In doctrine a Calvinist. From Guildford School he entered at Balliol College, Oxford, where he obtained a fellowship. In 1597 he was chosen Master of University College, and two years afterwards was made Dean of Winchester. He served the office of Vice-Chancellor, in which he displayed great abilities. Ambassadors, in 1609, he

ABBADIE James, D.D., Dean of Killaloe, in Ireland.

Born at Nay, in Berne, 1654 (or, according to some authorities, 1658); died in London, 1727. A French Protestant divine, universally esteemed for the excellence of his character, and one of the most eloquent and learned men of the age in which he lived. He studied chiefly at Sedan, where he received the degree of Doctor in Theology. At the Revolution he accompanied Marshal Schomberg to England, and was promoted to the Deanery of Killaloe.

TRAITE de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne. Troisième édition, revue, corrigée, et augmentée. 2 vols. 12°. Rotterdam. 1692.

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This work was received with enthusiasm immediately on its appearance, by Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. The last editions have agreed in considering it

edition was published in 1684, the second, much augmented, appeared in 1688.

TRAITE de la Divinité de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ. 12°.

Rotterd. 1689.

L'ART de se Connoître soy-mesme, ou la Recherche des Sources de la Morale. 12°.

Rotterd. 1693.

An excellent system of morality. In the edition at Lyons (1693), all the passages which favour the Protestant religion were left out.

LE TROMPER de la Providence et de la Religion; ou, l'Ouverture des Sept Seaux par le Fils de Dieu; où l'on trouvera la première partie de l'Apocalypse clairement expliquée par ce qu'il y a de plus connu dans l'Histoire et de moins contesté dans la Parole de Dieu. Avec une nouvelle et très sensible démonstration de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne. 4 vols. 12°.

Amst. 1723.

One of the boldest commentaries on the Apocalypse ever published.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT of Prophecy in the Character and Conduct of Jesus Christ. From the impressive Treatise on the Truth of the Christian Religion. 12°.

Lond. 1810.

SAMONS et Panégyriques. 3 vols. 12°.

Amst. 1760.

Vol. I.

Histoire sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de M. Abbé.

iii.-lvi.

Canterbury.

AN EXPOSITION upon the Prophet Jonah. A new edition by Grace Webster: to which is added a Life of the Author. 2 vols. large 12°.

Lond. 1845.

Vol. I.

Life of Archbishop Abbot.

Chap. i.-ii. 9.

Vol. II.

Chap. ii. 10.-iv.

First published in 1600, and received with great applause.

HISTORY of the Massacre of the Valtoline. [In Fox's Martyrs.]

ABERNETHY, John, Bishop of Cathaeff, in Scotland.

Instituted minister at Jedburgh, 1607. Preferred to the Bishopric of Cathaeff, 1644. Deprived by the Presbyterian Assembly of 1638.

A CHRISTIAN and Heavenly Treatise, containing Physicke for the Soule; very necessary for all that would enjoy Soundness of Mind and Peace of Conscience. Newly corrected and enlarged by the Author. 4°.

Lond. 1622.

Preface and Verses to the Author.

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BARROW, ISAAC, D.D.

Born in London, 1630; died in London, 1677. One of the most eminent of English divines and a distinguished mathematician. Educated at the Charter House. Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, 1649. He was the first Lucasian Lecturer in mathematics at Cambridge, 1663, and was succeeded by Sir Isaac Newton, 1669. Appointed Master of Trinity College, 1672. His Sermons are esteemed as complete Treatises, exhausting every subject on which they treat.

THEOLOGICAL Works. 8 vols. 8°.

Oxford University Press, 1830.

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AMBROSE, SAINT, Bishop of Milan.

Born A.D. 340, at Treves, according to the best authorities; died at Milan, 397. One of the great Fathers of the fourth century. Ordained Bishop of Milan, 374. He excommunicated the Emperor Theodosius for the massacre at Thessalonica, and did not absolve him until after a penance of eight months and a public humiliation. His style, though early, is eloquent, firm, and bold. The following is the best edition of his Works. A good reprint of it was published at Venice, 1781, in 8 vols. 4°.

OPERA, ad Manuscriptos Codices Vaticanos, Galicanos, Belgicos, &c., nec-non ad editiones veteres emendata, studio Monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti. 2 vols. folio.

Par. 1686—90.

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well. On the Parables, Vol. 1. 1.

Preliminary Dissertation on the Nature and Origin of the
Parable. B. Bailey. On the Parables, 1.

2. *On Various Parables.*

Gospel Mysteries Unveiled; or, an Exposition
of all the Parables. B. Keach. Folio.

Discourses on the Parables of our Saviour. S.
Bourn. Lond. 1701.

Disc. vols. 3 & 4. 8°. Lond. 1763-64.

Practical Discourses upon the Parables of our
Saviour. J. Brown. 12.

3. *The Parable of the Sower.*

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed. T.
Taylor. 4°. Lond. 1623.

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Harwood. 12°. Lond. 1776.

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plied. Dr. G. Muir. 12°. Lond. 1769.

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4. *The Tares and Wheat.*
The Parable of the Tares expounded and ap-
plied: in ten Sermons. Dr. Peter Heylyn.
4°. Lond. 1659.
The Parable of the Tares: in twenty-one Ser-
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- 2 VOLS. 8°. LOND. 1710.
Discourses upon the Parables of our blessed
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On the Parables and Miracles, Vols. 1
and 2. Lond. 1771.
Discourses on the Parables. W. Dodd, D.D.
2 vols. 8°. 1757.
A Delineation of the Parables. Andrew Gray,
D.D. 8°. Lond. 1777.
Sermons on the Parables. John Farrer, M.A.
8°. Lond. 1809.
Discourses on the Parables. W. Uggoh.
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